



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

In-Confidence

Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 6 April 2020

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Proactively Released

Status Report

The Status Report continues to have relatively little content with DOC staff in lockdown.

We are collating responses to your request about Cabinet papers and will provide this to you by the due date of Wednesday 8 April. The regular Cabinet Paper Report to you will resume after that, as will the list of conservation related Select Committee matters. We have discussed timeframes for the Estimates Select Committee process with your office and this work is under way.

Regarding other routine content of the Status Report; the Director-General's diary remains fluid and is not included this week, and with the cancellation of events DOC is working directly with your office on media opportunities.

1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 DOC's response to COVID-19

- This week, DOC transitioned into its second incident management team (IMT), and has a strong focus on connecting with staff, putting the right support in place and setting the business up to succeed in this environment.
- All staff continue to work from home, other than those identified as essential services as per Government policy.
- Work continues apace on guidance and policies to support the business to operate effectively in a COVID-19 Level 4 situation.
- A COVID-19 email has been set up for all DOC staff to engage with COVID IMT and there is a system in place to triage enquiries to the relevant part of the IMT for response.
- A COVID information hub has also been set up on the DOC intranet, providing staff with up-to-date information on how to manage at home and at work.
- Staff wellbeing and welfare is top-of-mind and is being monitored regularly at both local and national level.
- We will maintain a strong focus on wellbeing through leader-led communication and continue to develop wellbeing resources for managers and staff.
- The Customer Engagement Unit is developing a refreshed strategy which includes content planning for the 'Let Nature In' campaign (see also item 2.2), previously discussed with your office. Further updates will follow. It is recognised that this period provides great opportunities to educate and inform.
- External media inquiries are increasing as the public seek fresh content, stories and perspectives. We are supporting your office with some opportunities.
- We will continue to ensure that DOC is linked in to All-of-Government and that requests for assistance are efficiently triaged and responded to.

Contact: Kevin O'Connor, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19 Response:
[REDACTED]

1.2 RMA Advocacy Update

DOC's recent RMA work is as follows:

Submissions

Sky Play Adventures Limited – Huka Falls Zipline

- On 30 March, DOC submitted raising concerns about an application from Sky Play Adventures Limited to construct a zipline course on PCL and private freehold land which crosses the Waikato River.
- The submission raised issues around consultation with different iwi which have overlapping interests at the site, and the proposed ecological enhancement and mitigation plans.

Other

- We note that the COVID-19 lockdown has resulted in the RMA Planning team receiving daily schedule changes for the statutory processes it is involved in, particularly as they relate to plans and Environment Court processes. At this stage resource consents appear to be continuing up until such time that a hearing is required. Presently the majority of RMA processes are due to recommence around the first week of May. We will provide you with a further update should this situation change.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP): Postponement of meetings

- New Zealand is an active Party of ACAP, which plays an important role in advocating for the protection of albatrosses and petrels from global threats such as fisheries bycatch.
- The next technical meetings of ACAP (Working Groups and Advisory Committee) were scheduled to be held in Ecuador in late August 2020.
- Due to the current Covid-19 related travel restrictions, ACAP is seeking agreement from Parties to postpone these meetings by one year. As a result, the next Meeting of Parties, scheduled for May 2021 in Australia, is also proposed to be postponed for one year.
- DOC, as lead agency with regard to ACAP, intends to indicate New Zealand's agreement to the proposed postponement of meetings.
- If Parties agree to postpone the meetings, any necessary decision-making (e.g. approval of budgets) will be made by established intersessional processes.
- DOC and Fisheries New Zealand officials are working with the Secretariat to develop a programme of engagement across Parties to continue ACAP's important conservation work through electronic means through the proposed lengthened intersessional period.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Healthy Nature Healthy People

- The 'Let Nature In' programme will support New Zealanders' wellbeing through connection to nature, during and following the Covid-19 Level 4 Lockdown. There are four strands in the work programme:

- Digital campaign – a social media campaign using short videos showing people how to ‘Let Nature In’ during lockdown. The first wave of digital advertisements went live on 3 April, along with the Let Nature In landing page at www.doc.govt.nz. New Zealand Geographic has expressed interest in supporting this campaign and is continuing discussions with DOC, to confirm what shape this support might take.
 - Toyota Kiwi Guardians (TKG) – activities that can benefit conservation for 6-10-year-olds and their families. This is being repurposed to enable children to take action in their home environments. An email campaign to existing TKG families will be launched on 6 April. DOC Operations field staff working from home will be able to help create content.
 - ‘50 Best Things’ – simple activities that help people connect with nature and enhance wellbeing. Launch of five activities per week that will encourage New Zealanders to engage with nature, beginning 6 April. Each activity will include how to do it, how to extend it, and its wellbeing benefits.
 - Conservation education: learning from home. This will provide information to support teachers, parents and children learning from home. Repurposed from education resources, the “Learning from home” webpage currently has five activities live, with additional activities ready for publication. DOC will promote the webpage and will be sending teachers communications, including resources and tools.
- The Let Nature In programme is designed to be immediately responsive to changing messaging about the lockdown - all messaging will be in complete alignment with MOH/COVID-19 messaging and requirements.
 - The campaign will share digital assets with partners (commercial, community and the Covid19.govt.nz website) through the COVID-19 Public Information Manager.
 - Let Nature In will continue throughout the Covid-19 Level 4 phase, and more strands will be added in coming weeks to support engaging New Zealanders in nature while staying safe.

Contact: _____



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Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 13 April 2020

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Proactively Released

Status Report

This report includes more of the usual content. We have re-established the Cabinet Paper Report (see further below) and the summary of conservation matters before select committees. With the continuing fluidity around the Covid-19 response, and the regular contact you are having with the Director-General, we are not yet including his diary.

1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 DOC's response to COVID-19

- There is good work under way to prepare policy and guidance on how DOC staff can operate at the various alert levels, with a focus on moving to Alert Level 3. This includes the management of operating at different alert levels across regions, and access to DOC land and facilities.
- Guidance to staff for dealing with the public is being updated regularly on a range of issues, including wildlife, hunting, invoicing for concessionaires, security, and PPE distribution.
- Facilitating and supporting staff working from home continues to be a key focus, with new information and systems being rolled out as they come available.
- We are delivering ongoing internal and external communications on a wide variety of policies and issues.
- We are continuing to reinforce the stay at home, stay local and stay safe messages with media interviews and releases ahead of the Easter break.
- DOC's dedicated Covid-19 email address, available for staff to email any requests and raise issues, is working well. On 23 March, 54 emails came through this channel, and on 6 April it received 220, demonstrating its effectiveness as a means for staff to communicate concerns.
- We will continue to ensure that DOC is linked into All-of-Government, and that requests for assistance are efficiently triaged and responded to.

Contact: Kevin O'Connor, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19 Response:
[REDACTED]

1.2 Cabinet Papers

- This item responds to your request to identify the priority of conservation papers once Cabinet committees resume and any statutory matters Cabinet needs to consider before the end of April.
- We have included the updated Cabinet Paper Report with the Status Report this week. The report includes a new column noting our proposed level of priority for each conservation paper once Cabinet is ready to consider those matters.
- We have identified no Conservation matters where there are statutory requirements for Cabinet to consider the matter before the end of April.

Contact: [REDACTED]

1.3 RMA Advocacy Update

DOC's recent RMA work is as follows:

Appeals

Queenstown Lakes District Plan Review

- Queenstown Lakes District Council notified its decisions on Stage 1 of the review of the district plan on 7 May 2018. DOC and other parties subsequently lodged appeals to the Environment Court in relation to the indigenous biodiversity chapter of the proposed district plan, seeking to amend and clarify the provisions for the protection of indigenous biodiversity in the district.
- As a result of mediation, and expert caucusing of the issues in contention and a reduction in the number of parties to the appeals, the Court hearing scheduled for November 2019 did not proceed. Further caucusing in December 2019 confirmed agreement between the parties on an appropriate set of provisions.
- The Court has since issued an order by consent on 25 March this year, confirming the agreement reached between the parties to the appeals. This ends DOC's involvement in the plan review.

Other

EEZ Act Application – Coastal Resources Ltd

- On 25 March, Coastal Resources Ltd (CRL) withdrew its application for a marine dumping consent.
- By way of a background, in 2015, CRL applied to the EPA for a marine dumping permit under the EEZ Act to increase the size and amount allowed to be deposited at an existing disposal site 25km east of Great Barrier Island. The application was to dump up to 250,000 m³ marina dredge material from marinas in the Auckland and Waikato regions. DOC submitted in opposition to the application.
- The EPA's Decision-Making Committee (DMC) approved the application in 2016. The application was appealed to the High Court on points of law by a number of parties, including iwi, but not including DOC.
- In December 2019, the High Court referred the application back to the DMC for reconsideration, to have regard to the advice of the EPA's Maori Advisory Committee, Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao (NKTT).
- The DMC requested the EPA to review the submissions from iwi authorities and groups who may be affected by the application in light of the NKTT advice and report back by 25 March 2020. This did not happen, however, due to the outbreak of COVID-19. On that same date, CRL withdrew its application.

EEZ Act Application – BW Offshore Ltd

- On 27 March, the EPA issued a ruling that allows BW Offshore (BWO) to disconnect the mooring lines and retrieve the anchors of its vessel in the Tui oil field, South Taranaki Bight.
- The ruling is one of two sought by BWO for a series of activities required to remove its vessel after oil production in the Tui field was stopped due to the insolvency of operator, Tamarind Taranaki Limited, in September 2019.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 Trans Tasman Resources Limited (TTRL) – Court of Appeal decision

- On 3 April, the Court of Appeal issued its judgment in respect of the TTRL appeal and cross-appeals made by the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board and others. We understand that this is the first time a conservation board has participated in appeals before the High Court and Court of Appeal.
- The Court of Appeal upheld the concerns of the conservation board and others, identifying multiple errors of law in the approach of the Decision Making Committee of the EPA when initially granting a marine consent to TTRL to mine sand in the Taranaki Bight.
- The Court of Appeal, however, upheld TTRL's argument that the company was not using an adaptive management approach. An adaptive management approach is prohibited in the context of marine discharge, and the High Court had previously decided TTRL was operating an adaptive management approach.
- The TTRL marine discharge consent remains on hold, and the application has again been referred back to the Decision Making Committee of the EPA for reconsideration.
- Notices of application for leave to appeal or cross-appeal must be made by 5 May, being 20 working days from the date of judgment.
- TTRL is still considering the judgment. The conservation board will meet via telephone conference on 20 April to consider the board's next steps, and it is taking legal advice on the matter.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Staying connected with priority stakeholders

- It is crucial that DOC stays well-connected to its priority relationships throughout the COVID-19 response phase. Our relationship management system (RMS) is proving an invaluable tool to help us with this.
- The RMS ensures that DOC identifies and reviews its priority relationships on a regular basis.
- DOC leads for each priority relationship are recorded in the system, and are visible across the organisation. The leads hold single point accountability for their relationships, maintain an overview of relationship health, and address or elevate critical issues. Leads are currently DDGs and Directors, and the RMS will be rolled out to further parts of the organisation, i.e. managers, later this year.
- Currently, over 450 iwi, government and community organisations, businesses and philanthropists are part of the RMS.
- We are identifying ways to improve DOC's communication with and support for priority relationships during the COVID-19 response phase. We also want to investigate and understand how we can work with others as part of the recovery phase.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.3 DOC/Air New Zealand Partnership Update and video clip

- You have expressed an interest in what we are doing to provide Air NZ with support.
- We have kept in regular communication with Air NZ over the last month, to reiterate our support.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- DOC is working to create a brief video clip as a short 'thank you' to Air NZ for its partnership support, to be shared between key internal staff in both organisations.
- We are working with your office to provide an opportunity for you be a part of this special thank you message.
- The tone will be light and friendly, and the video gives us an opportunity to put a face to the many biodiversity, technical and support staff who enable the partnership work to happen.
- It will be approximately 30-45 seconds long, and feature around 25 key DOC staff, from senior leaders to field rangers.
- Staff will film themselves in their own backyards, to convey the message, 'Thank you/kia kaha/kia ora Air New Zealand', with a longer statement from key leaders, such as 'You've been a great partner to us, and we're here for you'.
- We intend the video for internal use only (within both organisations) at this stage.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 PF2050 Summit 2021

- Due to Covid-19, the Predator Free Summit, planned for July 2020, has been rescheduled for 10-11 June 2021, five years from the official launch of Predator Free 2050.
- It will be held at Te Papa and hosted by DOC, PF2050 Ltd, Predator Free NZ Trust and the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge.
- The two-day summit will bring together scientists, iwi, agency leads, community groups, predator-free project leads and landowners from across the country.
- Its purpose is to galvanise our shared vision and strategy, share and showcase what has already been achieved, and unpack some of the big challenges that lie ahead as we journey towards a predator-free New Zealand.
- Predator Free Summit 2021 will include inspirational speakers, plenary sessions, innovation showcases and working group workshops.
- The summit will be a great chance for reinvigoration and unification as our country emerges from the challenges of Covid-19.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.5 Young kiwi flouts Social Distancing Guidelines

- Lockdown for DOC's rangers in residence on Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island Nature Reserve is not that different to most days except for when kiwi come to visit.
- The young kiwi obviously wasn't aware of the importance of practising social distancing as it literally walked right past the ranger's feet.

- This kiwi walked upstairs, using the external wooden ramp from the garden below, and walked around the house on the upstairs wooden deck, gently probing with its bill.
- The rangers did not want to stress the bird by attempting to catch it - so they quietly stood by and watched as the kiwi casually made its way through the dining room and kitchen, before slowly heading out the kitchen door, down the ramp, and back into the forest.
- The kiwi was not distressed or dehydrated, and, while the nature of this visit was exceptional, it is not unusual to see kiwi during the day on Hauturu.
- Resident rangers and an ecologist along with their two children, and a visiting ranger are currently in lockdown on the predator-free island.
- Hauturu-o-Toi Little Barrier Island Nature Reserve is a 3083ha wildlife sanctuary for endangered native species, managed by DOC, in partnership with Ngāti Manuhiri.

Contact: [REDACTED]

3 Addendum

This section includes content that is sensitive or is being considered by the Minister of Conservation or other Ministers. This information is not being released proactively.

Subject headings of content in this section are:

- Covid-19 economic recovery package
- DOC Community Fund (DOCCF) update



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Week beginning: 20 April 2020

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

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Minister of Conservation

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Status Report

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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 COVID-19 economic recovery package

- [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
- A Sustainable Land Use investment package has been developed in conjunction with MPI and MfE. DOC has a range of suggested initiatives covering predator control and biodiversity restoration, protection and surveying. We will provide a memo to you and the Ministers for Primary Industry and the Environment shortly.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1.2 DOC's response to COVID-19

- We are continuing to prepare policy and guidance on how DOC staff can operate at the various alert levels.
- The announcement this week on Alert Level 2 & 3 settings is strongly shaping our guidance on the likely work settings for office and field-based staff, particularly for Alert Level 3 at this time.
- Safety for DOC staff is paramount so a strong focus of our current work is to ensure our staff will have appropriate PPE available to undertake work activities under all Alert Levels.
- Work on guidance for field activities for iwi and community groups will mirror that prepared for staff and be made available to them to guide any work they wish to resume.
- A continued focus is on staff wellbeing and supporting staff to be able to continue to work from home. This includes new information and systems being rolled out as they are available.
- Ongoing internal and external comms are being delivered on a wide variety of policies and issues, which we anticipate will increase significantly over the next week following the latest announcements regarding Alert Levels 2 & 3.
- We will continue to ensure that DOC is linked in to All-of-Government and that requests for assistance are efficiently triaged and responded to.

Contact: Kevin O'Connor, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19 Response:
[REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 Pūkaka to Palliser Community Conservation Hub

- Grants to the Pūkaka to Palliser Alliance (P2P) and the Tasman Environment Trust (TET) have been approved.
- The P2P Grant is for \$200,000.
- The TET Grant is for \$140,000, which has leveraged a further \$120,000 from the Rātā Foundation.
- These grants are to enable P2P and TET to work as community hubs, growing conservation outcomes through others.
- P2P will continue building projects in the southern Wairarapa (“Tonganui” or Big South). TET is stepping up its predator trapping and riparian restoration delivery, which has been supported through the One Billion Trees programme.
- Funding for these Grants is separate to the department’s one-off Community Hub \$1M funding, which is being administered through the DOC Community Fund round and aims to expand the community hub model nationally.
- An opportunity exists for you to announce these two grants should you wish to do so, and a press release has been drafted. We will liaise with your office.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Beachcast Hector’s dolphin

- On Saturday 11 April, Fisheries Compliance officers responded to a call about a beachcast Hector’s dolphin that was found already dead in the Port Underwood area.
- The dolphin has been picked up and is being retained (frozen) until DOC can arrange for a necropsy to be carried out at Massey University.
- Massey University is not currently undertaking necropsies, so there will be a delay in processing this dolphin.
- There are no obvious markings suggesting the death was fishing-related, however, the cause of death will not be known until the necropsy results are available.
- A further update will be provided as results become available.

Contact: [REDACTED]



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Week beginning: 27 April 2020

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Status Report

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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 DOC's response to COVID-19

- The focus in the past week has been to ensure DOC can work safely at Alert Level 3 and supporting decision making around what field work can resume.
- We have provided guidance and policy on work settings for office and field-based staff.
- We have developed guidelines and messaging for how community groups, volunteers and stakeholders can operate under Alert Level 3.
- We also finalised guidance on how hunting and visitor facilities will be managed under Alert Level 3.
- Work on guidance for field activities for iwi and community groups working on PCL will mirror that prepared for staff and be made available to them to guide any work they wish to resume.
- A continued focus is on staff wellbeing and supporting staff to be able to continue to work from home. This includes new information and systems being rolled out as they are available.
- A significant amount of internal and external communications have been delivered to support all of the above.
- The national IMT structure is transitioning to a national Task Force to reflect the changing nature of advice that is required to guide the department in the next few weeks.
- We will continue to ensure that DOC is linked in to All-of-Government and that requests for assistance are efficiently triaged and responded to.

Contact: Kevin O'Connor, Deputy Director-General, COVID-19 Response:
[REDACTED]

1.2 COVID-19 economic response package

- Treasury has established a process for bidding into the \$50 billion COVID-19 Recovery and Response Fund. It has three funding waves, the first two cover immediate and near-term investment, the third covers longer-term investment. You have received a memo from Treasury setting out the process in more detail.
- There is a fast track process for deciding near-term investment funding. Departments need to provide final submissions to Treasury by 28 April for final decisions to be made by Cabinet by 11 May. The process for wave 3 funding has yet to be clearly set out.
- You, the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for the Environment have received advice on a suggested \$1.3 billion sustainable land use package that is intended to form the core component of the wave 2 funding bid (we have been advised that joint bids will be considered favourably). The DOC

component covers predator control, biodiversity restoration, protection and monitoring.

- Further work is ongoing to identify how to progress an initiative known as 'revitalising New Zealand's communities through nature-based employment'. This focuses on helping businesses retain their staff while they reset their business model to succeed post COVID-19. Staff that would otherwise be made redundant would remain with the business but be deployed onto regional conservation priorities. PWC has undertaken some initial economic analysis this week in time for the funding request to Treasury on 23 April.
- We are receiving funding proposal suggestions from a variety of sources, including externally, and are seeking to integrate these wherever possible, but will not be able to meet all expectations. The specific requirement to have cost-effective and immediately deliverable projects to provide economic stimulus and to meet conservation objectives may rule out many proposals for consideration in the current funding round.
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

Contact: [Redacted]

2 Updates

2.1 Tourism sector initiative lead by Tourism New Zealand

- On 22 April, Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) provided a first draft of the Cabinet paper for our feedback.
- The purpose of the paper is to highlight the breadth and depth of COVID-19's impact on the tourism sector, to note the dispersed nature of the sector and to seek agreement to establish a sector recovery plan.
- The paper includes alignment to the New Zealand-Aotearoa Government Tourism Strategy that you have previously endorsed.
- The paper recognises and supports the nature-based economic recovery concept that DOC is advocating for.
- There are several risks within the paper that we have addressed through our feedback. These include:
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]

- We understand that Minister Davis will provide feedback to TNZ on the paper during the week of 27 April.
- We will continue to keep you up to date with further details on this matter.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Healthy Nature Healthy People

The 'Let Nature In' programme of work aims to support New Zealanders while we are in COVID-19 restrictions, Levels 2-4. Progress to date:

- The website landing page for Let Nature In is live and can be accessed from the DOC website.
- The digital campaign, Let Nature In, is well underway. We have released the first in a series of short videos of nature-based activities for lockdown, and an initial blog post giving an overview of Let Nature In. The videos and blog can be viewed on DOC's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels.
- The Toyota Kiwi Guardians (TKG) weekly action competition has commenced. The activities are all connected to nature, based at home. Since lockdown began the Kiwi Guardians Facebook page has been visited by 31,000 people. An email has been sent to the 10,000 families who regularly participate in Toyota Kiwi Guardians, encouraging them to engage in the new TKG actions in their own homes and gardens.
- '50 things to do' is a new initiative we have created on the back of New Zealand children telling us their favourite things to do in nature. We are using some of their responses which suit this period of lockdown. Each week we promote five activities, encouraging New Zealanders to engage with nature at home to support their wellbeing. This is being shared with teachers through DOC's education network, through our partners and on DOC's social media channels.
- Learning from home resource – providing nature-based learning activities to support teachers, parents and children learning from home. This content has directly reached over 1,100 teachers and has been shared with Ministry of Education as well as other partners and local networks. The Ministry of Education are making this resource available on their Learning from Home website and including it within the Ministry's fortnightly Education Gazette which is distributed to all schools across Aotearoa.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.3 International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL)

- We have received guidance that the Minister of Tourism will consider changes to the IVL investment plan after the Tourism NZ-led restart plan has been delivered. We will take the tourism restart plan's goals and recommendations into account when delivering joint MBIE-DOC advice to IVL Ministers (Conservation, Tourism and Finance); we anticipate delivering the advice within a month of receiving the plan.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 Deer plan

- The deer plan is still on track, though some of the engagement has slowed down in the past month as people's priorities have been elsewhere.
- There has been a good level of positive engagement from all stakeholders to contribute to better deer management in NZ, and we are well placed to begin the second phase of the project in June to develop a preferred approach.
- Some of the factors in the deer equation are changing as we head into a post-COVID operating environment, and we will now need to consider these in a different way than we might have anticipated a few months ago.
- For example, the decline in venison prices already previously occurring before lockdown has been hastened and is likely to lead to reduced WARO activity for at least the coming year.
- Likewise, the international hunter market will likely disappear for some time and the fate of some game parks and their herds needs some consideration.
- We also anticipate there will be some increase in recreational harvesting as families look to put cheap protein on the table in a slower economic climate.
- Preliminary discussions on the current research needs, such as quantifying ungulate population sizes, was postponed by the lockdown but we will be resuming this work again shortly.
- We are on track for developing a preferred approach by the end of the year.

Contact: Martin Kessick, DDG Biodiversity: [REDACTED]

3 Addendum

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Subject headings of content in this section are:

- Update on NHF land acquisition
- Improving whitebait management – COVID Pathways