



Cabinet paper material

Proactive release

Hon Tama Potaka, Minister of Conservation

Title: *Modernising Conservation Land Management: Approval to Consult*

Title: *Exploring Charging for Access to Some Public Conservation Land: Approval to Consult*

Title: *Growing Third-Party Revenue for Conservation*

Title: *Conservation Priorities*

Date: 25 November 2024

These documents have been proactively released:

Cabinet paper – Modernising Conservation Land Management: Approval to Consult

Date: 28 October 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Committee minute – ECO-24-MIN-0235

Date: 23 October 2024

Author: Cabinet Office

Cabinet paper – Exploring Charging for Access to Some Public Conservation Land: Approval to Consult

Date: 28 October 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Committee minute – ECO-24-MIN-0236

Date: 23 October 2024

Author: Cabinet Office

Cabinet paper – Growing Third-Party Revenue for Conservation

Date: 12 August 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Committee minute – ECO-24-MIN-0152

Date: 7 August 2024

Author: Cabinet Office

Cabinet paper – Conservation Priorities

Date: 12 August 2024

Author: Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Committee minute – ECO-24-MIN-0154

Date: 7 August 2024

Author: Cabinet Office

24-B-0128 Briefing: Conservation Amendment Bill

24-B-0264: Briefing: Conservation Amendment Bill – Timeline and scope)

24-B-0390: Proposals for Conservation Amendment Bill

24-B-0463: Briefing - Draft Cabinet Paper for Conservation Amendment Bill

Interim Regulatory Impact Statement - Modernising conservation land management

Interim Regulatory Impact Statement - Land exchanges and disposals

24-B-0186: Briefing - Opportunities to grow revenue from visitors

24-B-0246: Briefing - Further opportunities to grow third-party revenue

Material redacted

Some parts of this information release have been withheld as they are not appropriate for release. Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it. If requested under the OIA, these sections would be reconsidered for release at that time.

Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Conservation Priorities

Proposal

- 1 This paper outlines my priorities for the Conservation portfolio over the next three years and supports the delivery of the Government's goals to rebuild the economy, deliver better public services, and tackle environmental issues like climate change.
- 2 My vision for Conservation is to encourage more visits by tourists and New Zealanders to our iconic landscapes, to activate more commercial opportunities on public conservation land, and to ultimately enhance biodiversity across our country.
- 3 To achieve this, we need to simplify conservation management rules, focus on high conservation value work, generate more sustainable revenue streams whilst controlling costs, and better partner with Iwi, communities and business to drive greater opportunities within clear conservation parameters. Additional revenues will be retained for investment in high-value conservation outcomes and tourism.
- 4 I propose a two-phase programme to modernise regulations to make it easier to work with the Department of Conservation (DOC). My goal is to make DOC financially sustainable by 2026. This means that DOC:
 - 4.1 understands the costs associated with delivering Government's objectives for the Department's biodiversity, land manager, visitor network, and statutory functions; and
 - 4.2 has funding (e.g. through budget appropriations, third party revenue, and partnership arrangements) necessary to responsibly manage and deliver on its functions within appropriate standards and fiscal responsibility.
- 5 This paper should be read in conjunction with a second Cabinet paper, *Growing Third-Party Revenue for Conservation*.

Executive summary

- 6 I propose a two-phase reform programme to deliver on the Government's wider priorities. In Phase One, I intend to:
 - 6.1 fix concession processes;
 - 6.2 target investment in high-value conservation outcomes;
 - 6.3 generate new revenue and recalibrate costs; and
 - 6.4 strengthen relationships with Iwi/hapū for better conservation outcomes.

7 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Background

8 DOC manages nearly a third of the country’s land mass (>8 million hectares) with an annual budget of circa \$650 million being 0.45% of Core Crown spending.¹ DOC’s revenue comes from the Crown (83% of revenue), the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (7%), concessions (3%), and visitors and other sources (7%). DOC has cost recovery mechanisms in place including tourist charges, leases and concessions fees. DOC also earns revenue from sponsorships and donations. However, together these revenues are not sufficient to cover current departmental costs.

9 Under the Conservation Act 1987, DOC is responsible for managing public conservation land (PCL) and water, protecting biodiversity, enabling recreational and economic activities, advising the Minister, and advocating for conservation. DOC meets these statutory responsibilities alongside a network of statutory, community, Iwi/hapū/Māori, private landowners, regional councils and non-government organisations. DOC is the lead government agency in this network.

10 The main departmental outputs for DOC are:

- 10.1 management of natural heritage – maintaining, restoring and protecting ecosystems, habitats and species (\$333 million being 52% of costs); and
- 10.2 management of recreational facilities – maintaining more than 2,000 buildings and huts, 300 camp sites, 13,000 structures, 14,600 kms of tracks, and over 4,000 concessions (\$222 million being 34% of costs).

11 DOC’s land management functions are also largely funded from these output classes. Other expenditure included within the Conservation portfolio is community conservation programmes, historical heritage protection, and statutory planning and policy advice functions.

Increasing challenges for DOC

12 DOC has myriad responsibilities and limited resources to meet those responsibilities. DOC faces a combination of increasing cost pressures, rising environmental risks and ageing infrastructure. The Department has also inherited a legacy of ageing assets (e.g. the MetService land and buildings in Kelburn, Wellington) and a complex array of historical contracts with third parties set up under various different legislative regimes. Together, these factors present a significant and pressing challenge to DOC’s ability to deliver its responsibilities for biodiversity, recreation and heritage. DOC’s

¹ Vote Conservation 2024/25.

resources are spread very thinly - inflation and cost pressures make it impossible every year to maintain the status quo without reform.

- 13 New Zealand's biodiversity is under threat, and these threats are growing - avian bird flu is sweeping the world and New Zealand has recently seen incursions of sea spurge, caulerpa seaweed and golden clams. Climate change is adding further strain to ecosystems, heightening fire risk and helping pests to breed and spread further. Wilding pines, weeds and wallabies are spreading in both conservation areas and on productive farmland.
- 14 Native wildlife is at serious risk of extinction. Ninety-four percent of our reptile species, 82 percent of bird species, 80 percent of bat species, 76 percent of freshwater fish species, and 46 percent of plant species either face extinction or are at risk of being threatened with extinction.² Species decline raises reputational risks and undermines resiliency of ecosystems which help to underpin the economy.
- 15 Extreme weather has added further cost pressures. South Island flooding in 2020 cost \$13 million; Cyclone Dovi in 2022 cost \$12 million for repairs to visitor infrastructure; and Cyclone Gabrielle caused an estimated \$90 million worth of damage to conservation assets.
- 16 I intend to meet these pressing challenges to conservation by growing revenue and carefully prioritising spending for maximum impact.

Conservation is an economic opportunity

- 17 New Zealand is known for its beautiful natural areas, landscapes and wildlife. This image underpins tourism and demand for our primary industries. Together, these sectors earned \$65 billion of export revenue in 2023.³ Conservation-related tourism generates around \$4.1 billion per annum.⁴ In 2013, Landcare Research estimated that the economic value of New Zealand's land based ecosystems at \$57 billion dollars a year across areas such as the provision of water, erosion control, recreation, flood regulation and pollination.⁵ DOC has a key role in protecting and supporting ecosystems, and encouraging sustainable tourism, both of which underpin New Zealand's economy.
- 18 The DOC estate includes native forests, tussock lands, alpine areas, wetlands, dunelands, estuaries, lakes and islands, national forests, maritime parks, marine reserves, nearly 4,000 reserves, river margins, some coastline, and many offshore islands. This vast wilderness can generate more revenue for re-investment back into improved conservation outcomes. I see major revenue opportunities in four areas:
 - 18.1 **Greater domestic and international tourist visits:** Simplified rules and processes to enable greater investment in the DOC estate for better tourism experiences.

² Statistics NZ, 30 March 2023 *Our indigenous species are at risk of extinction*. Plants refers to vascular species of plants not lichen, moss etc.

³ Statistics NZ, For year to December 2023.

⁴ Department of Conservation, 2023 *Briefing to Incoming Minister of Conservation*.

⁵ Landcare Research, 2013 *'Total economic value' of New Zealand's land-based ecosystems and their services*. This covers all New Zealand and is not limited to PCL.

- 18.2 **Increased utilisation of DOC land:** The DOC estate includes areas of lower-quality land outside National Parks which may be suitable for commercial operations including forestry. PCL already supports mānuka honey production, low-impact livestock grazing, mining, the wild meat industry as well as recreational tramping, hunting and fishing.
- 18.3 **Fair pricing for use of DOC land:** I am considering options for improved pricing and price consistency for activities on the DOC estate, discussed below.
- 18.4 **Carbon capture and biodiversity arrangements:** New Zealand's native forests store 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon. Restoration of native trees and wetlands and improved management including pest control could increase carbon sequestration to help deliver New Zealand's climate change goals.

Conservation priorities

- 19 My overarching priority is to protect high value conservation areas that deliver the best outcomes for biodiversity and recreation. To achieve this, my goal is to increase available revenue and improve the performance of spending on conservation outcomes.
- 20 To this end, I have directed DOC to update the conservation system to identify new revenue, improve cost efficiency, and reduce red tape in its management of activities on PCL.
- 21 I have divided the work programme into two phases. Phase One has four components.

Priority 1 – Fix concessions processes

- 22 DOC uses concessions to allow a variety of activities on PCL. These include licenses and permits for business activities such as ski fields and guided walks; leases to use structures; and easements for infrastructure such as electricity lines and gas pipelines. DOC manages more than 4,000 concessions with many of those concessions established decades ago.
- 23 Processing of concessions has become burdensome and slow. As of May 2024, 26% of concessions applications were received more than one year ago. Conservation legislation is overly prescriptive in some places while being unclear or conflicted in other places. This creates legal uncertainty for the regulator and users. DOC faces the constant risk of legal challenge. For a number of concession applications, DOC expects litigation whichever decision it makes. Moreover, the legislation provides no way to speed up planning or permitting or allow tailored solutions, and the management of risk of financial liabilities from business failures on PCL has been variable over time (e.g. Ruapehu Alpine Lifts).
- 24 Concessions raise complex and important matters including appropriate uses of the DOC estate: how Iwi/hapū interests should be recognised particularly in high value commercial concession opportunities; certainty of rights which are necessary for long-term investments; and trade-offs between that certainty and flexibility needed to

encourage others to participate in contestable processes which supports better visitor experiences.

25 My goal is a concessions system that enables business to operate with certainty on PCL within conservation parameters. This will require the Government to clarify the acceptable uses of PCL, how Iwi/hapū rights and responsibilities in respect of concessions should be recognised. These changes will take time to develop. Analysis of comparable international jurisdictions including Australia, United Kingdom, USA and Canada show a streamlined and adaptive approach to conservation management is achievable.

26 This first phase of work is intended to address the key pain points in the system for concessions in particular while being achievable in time to make a meaningful improvement in this term. Some of the wider problems with the Conservation Act which multiple reports have identified will take longer to address. This includes looking at more streamlining of governance roles in the system, where there are interactions with Treaty settlements which will require further analysis.

27 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]

28 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]

29 Accordingly, I propose to immediately commence a work programme to clarify concession rules and improve concessions processing to:

- 29.1 slash DOC's permissions backlog;
- 29.2 make concessions processes more timely, predictable and efficient;
- 29.3 increase the number and range of activities on PCL consistent with conservation values;
- 29.4 encourage more competition and investment in economic opportunities on DOC land; and
- 29.5 deliver on the National Party manifesto commitment that no concession process takes more than a year.

30 To progress amending conservation legislation, I am planning to bring the following papers to Cabinet:

- 30.1 **October 2024** – Approval to consult on proposed concessions and land management amendments to conservation legislation.

30.2 [February 2025] – Policy decisions for amendments through a Conservation Amendment Bill.

30.3 [September 2025] – Agreement to introduce a Conservation Amendment Bill.

Priority 2 – Target investment in high-value conservation outcomes

31 My second priority is to target DOC’s efforts at the most cost-effective investments to protect biodiversity, support thriving native wildlife and wild landscapes, improve visitor experiences, and support heritage. To help do this DOC is developing a new planning tool which will allow us to better understand the trade-offs and benefits of different investment decisions.

32 Targeting high value areas may require reducing or stopping some existing work which will have an impact on outcomes. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

33 I intend to target recreational expenditure at high use areas. This may have an impact on visitor services in lower use areas such as the backcountry and will not be universally popular. However, it also offers opportunities to partner with key stakeholders who have interests in maintaining assets in lower use areas.

34 The Future Visitor Network Programme has been established to realign DOC’s visitor network to one that is both affordable to the Government and targeted to visitor needs. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

35 To focus DOC’s efforts on high value conservation areas I will deliver an implementation plan for the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy that targets high conservation areas. I will reset Predator-Free 2050 so that it helps deliver on protecting high value conservation. I also intend to progress arrangements for the Hauraki Gulf Bill which provides for the integrated health of the Gulf and all the different groups that have an interest in this iconic and important seascape.

36 To deliver on targeting high value conservation areas I am planning to bring the following papers to Cabinet:

36.1 **August 2024** - Progressing Hauraki Gulf Protection.

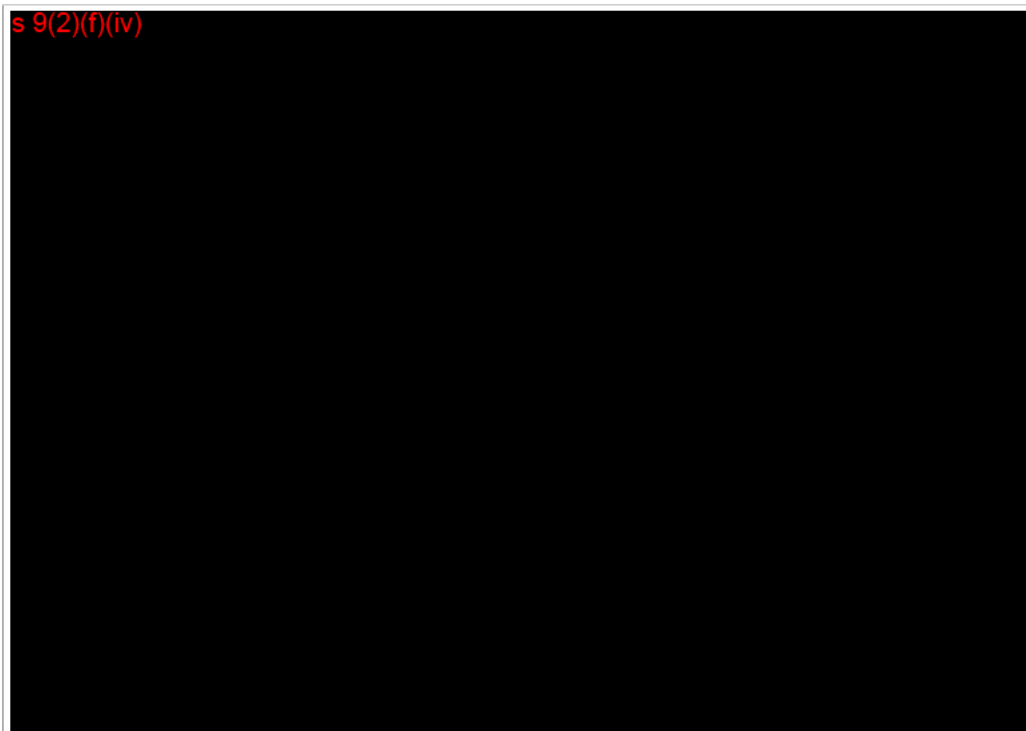
36.2 **October 2024** – Predator Free 2050 reset.

36.3 **October 2024** – Issue an Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Implementation Plan Discussion Document for public consultation.

36.4 **May 2025** – Confirm Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Implementation Plan.

Priority 3 – Generate new revenue and recalibrate costs

- 37 DOC has dramatically increasing costs influenced by inflation, cost pressures (e.g. staffing), major weather events, biodiversity impacts (e.g. caulerpa), and standards (e.g. health and safety, huts/tracks). DOC estimates that to fully undertake its responsibilities today it would cost \$2.3 billion per annum, and that it can only currently maintain 70% of the visitor network at a suitable standard.
- 38 The chart below shows the actual and forecast revenue and expenditure for DOC. It highlights the growing gap between the cost of existing activities and assets and revenue from government and third parties.



- 39 DOC has a range of growing cost pressures that are compromising its ability to sustain activities and outcomes at current levels. This includes:
 - 39.1 growing costs from wages and inflation, reaching approximately s 9(2)(f)(iv)
 - 39.2 insufficient funding to manage and maintain DOC's visitor network at its current scale – there is an estimated shortfall of \$300m capex (plus associated capital charge and depreciation) from between 2016-2022 to address visitor asset renewals alongside a \$40m annual shortfall in direct OPEX to fully maintain DOC's assets;
 - 39.3 on average, \$12m annual operating and capital expenditure is projected to respond to extreme weather events that damage visitor and biodiversity assets (damage from Cyclone Gabrielle on visitor sites, assets and biodiversity programme was estimated to be \$87m over five years); and

IN CONFIDENCE

- 39.4 growing visitor numbers and wider legislative changes are also imposing additional costs.
- 40 DOC has a work programme underway to improve its financial and asset management. This includes an expenditure review, modernising enterprise asset management, and streamlined planning and reporting. I have asked DOC to recalibrate its cost structure further by deliberately interrogating cost drivers (e.g. hut/track standards) and associated expenses (e.g. helicopter use).
- 41 Despite managing nearly a third of the country and some of the world's most iconic wild landscapes, DOC only earns \$20-24 million each year from concessions and is expected to earn \$35-40 million from the International Visitor Levy for the year end 30 June 2024. It generates around \$2 million from cost recoveries for regulatory services, and nearly \$25 million from hut and campsite fees. In addition, commercial and strategic partnerships contribute around \$3-4 million per annum. Whilst conservation-related tourism is estimated to be worth \$4.1 billion per annum, DOC receives considerably less from users.⁶ There is clear potential to generate more revenue from PCL.
- 42 A primary focus for financial performance is to generate new revenue at a material level. I am interrogating the following options:
- 42.1 improving the financial sustainability of the visitor network via access charging, carpark charging, donations, and increased revenue from retail;
 - 42.2 the Crown getting a fair financial return from mitigations/rents on access arrangements (e.g. mining) and lifting concession rates;
 - 42.3 increasing and ensuring cost recovery from permissions processes and management; and
 - 42.4 furthering opportunities to participate in existing and emerging markets e.g. attracting commercial partnerships with capital and capability for conservation management (like NEXT Foundation's investment in Project Mounga (Taranaki)), and increasing revenue from carbon sequestration in wetlands, native tree planting and browser control on regenerating native bush.
- 43 Cabinet recently agreed to increase the International Visitor Levy from \$35 to \$100. A small group of Ministers will continue to progress this mahi.
- 44 I propose that any additional revenue generated from this mahi be re-invested in the conservation estate to improve biodiversity, recreation and heritage outcomes.
- 45 As part of progressing this work, the following papers will be developed for Cabinet:
- 45.1 **August 2024** – Revenue action plan, seeking Cabinet approval to progress key opportunities to raise revenue (including the introduction of more user charges);

⁶ Department of Conservation, 2023 *Briefing to Incoming Minister of Conservation*.

- 45.2 **October 2024** – Milford Opportunities Project - Developing the Government’s response to MOP Advisory Board’s recommendations (joint paper with Minister for Tourism and Hospitality);
- 45.3 **November 2024** – Financial sustainability review – initial findings, key options and budget implications; and
- 45.4 **April 2025** – Follow up report on financial sustainability, seeking decisions on priorities and next steps for implementation.
- 46 This work programme will help deliver increased revenue, cost savings, and better targeted spending by:
- 46.1 identifying options and trade-offs for targeting limited resources to deliver the highest return on conservation outcomes;
- 46.2 improving business planning, data and systems to improve efficiency and better target investment towards highest priority outcomes; and
- 46.3 growing third party investment.
- 47 I intend to engage with the public on increased flexibility to remove restrictions on the exchange or sale of PCL and assets (and retiring assets) where this would deliver a net benefit to conservation including from management and financial perspectives.
- 48 Together, increased revenue and efficiencies will help achieve financial sustainability by 2026. A financially sustainable conservation system will also mean that DOC and its partners do not need to defer long term maintenance to meet immediate needs.

Priority 4 – Strengthen relationships with Iwi/hapū for better conservation outcomes

- 49 DOC needs clarity on how Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi (**Treaty of Waitangi**) rights should be recognised in the conservation system. Clear rules will allow DOC to do its work more efficiently and provide greater certainty for third parties.
- 50 To this end I will work closely with the Minister of Justice on the review of Treaty of Waitangi principles in legislation. In particular, I intend to consider the reference to Treaty of Waitangi principles in section 4 of the Conservation Act to ensure the legislation is fit for purpose and obligations on DOC and other parties are clear, especially in relation to concessions and management planning.⁷
- 51 The size of the Māori is estimated to be nearly \$100 billion now. Māori-related tourism contributes around \$1 billion annually to our economy.⁸ The increasing importance of the Māori economy amplifies the case for clear regulations.
- 52 DOC has more Treaty of Waitangi settlement implementation commitments than any other Government entity. I want to ensure we are working closely with Iwi/hapū on

⁷ Section 4 of the Conservation Act states: *This Act shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.*

⁸ Reserve Bank, 2018 *The Māori Economy 2018*.

the ground, so we are substantively meeting our Treaty of Waitangi settlement commitments and effectively interacting with Iwi/hapū to deliver on shared ambitions around conservation.

- 53 DOC is conducting an end-to-end review of its Treaty settlement system to make sure that the department is appropriately implementing its obligations. Enabling Iwi/hapū to engage with our regulatory processes (particularly management planning and concessions) more easily can help unlock their significant expertise and resources in both developing economic opportunities and delivering conservation and kaitiakitanga.
- 54 Following the Supreme Court decision regarding Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki in the Hauraki Gulf,⁹ the Government established an advisory group called the Options Development Group (the **Group**) to provide recommendations on how to better recognise the Treaty of Waitangi in the Conservation General Policies. The Group's report was published in 2022.¹⁰ The Government has not responded to this report. I will consider where it is appropriate to incorporate the Group's recommendations into legislative and regulatory changes to conservation subject to Cabinet approval. This will start with the Conservation Amendment Bill proposed for 2025.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi Implications

- 55 There are no current implications for Treaty of Waitangi matters arising from this paper. In the event that potential changes set out in this paper are formalised (e.g. access charging, regulatory changes to conservation management, statutory implementation of the Group's recommendations), I will set out the implications accordingly.

Cost-of-living Implications

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

Financial Implications

- 57 There are no immediate financial implications from this paper.

Legislative Implications

- 58 The proposals in this paper do not have any immediate legislative implications.

Impact Analysis

- 59 A Regulatory Impact Statement or Climate Implications of Policy Assessment are not required as no immediate regulatory changes are proposed and no substantial changes to greenhouse gas emissions will result from this proposal.

⁹ *Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Trust v Minister of Conservation* [2018] NZSC 122.

¹⁰ See <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/partial-reviews-of-conservation-general-policy-and-general-policy-for-national-parks/options-development-groups/options-development-group-report/>.

Population Implications

60 There are no immediate population implications from this paper.

Human Rights

61 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

62 No external resources were used in developing proposals in this paper.

Consultation

63 The following agencies were consulted on this paper: the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury and the Public Services Commission.

Communications

64 These priorities are being regularly communicated through public speeches and announcements.

Proactive Release

65 The Department of Conservation intends to release the Cabinet paper proactively within 30 business days of decisions being informed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

66 **Note that:**

66.1 Conservation-related tourism is already worth \$4.1 billion a year and by improving our regulatory system and partnering with third parties we can supercharge this.

66.2 We can spend tax-payer money more effectively by prioritising high value conservation domains and generating new investment by partnering with Iwi/hapū and business. For this to work we need to modernise rules and processes to make it easier to work with DOC.

66.3 Our native forests store 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon; looking after them is one of the largest contributions NZ makes to combatting global climate change. There is the potential to go further through afforestation and restoring wetlands on public conservation land to deliver cheap, long-term and nature-friendly carbon abatement.

67 **Agree** to focus on the following areas to deliver on the Government's priorities for conservation and our goals for the economy, climate change and delivering better public services:

IN CONFIDENCE

- 67.1 Update the conservation regulatory system by progressing legislation to improve performance in processing concessions and permissions.
- 67.2 Target investment in high conservation value areas to restore key degraded habitats, support recovery of native species and maximise carbon storage on public conservation land.
- 67.3 Generate new revenue and build a more financially sustainable conservation system by 2026. Develop a plan to partner for investment in protecting high value conservation domains in 2025.
- 67.4 Build positive working relationships with Iwi/hapū to make the most of their strong and long-term commitment to the environment.
- 68 **Agree** that the Minister of Conservation will engage with the public on increased flexibility to remove restrictions on the exchange or sale of public conservation land and assets where this would deliver a net benefit to conservation.
- 69 **Agree** that additional conservation revenue will be re-invested in the conservation estate to improve biodiversity, recreation and heritage.

Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation

RELEASED BY MINISTER OF CONSERVATION



Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Minute of Decision

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.

Minister of Conservation's Priorities

Portfolio **Conservation**

On 7 August 2024, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee:

1 **noted** that:

- 1.1 Conservation-related tourism is already worth \$4.1 billion a year and by improving New Zealand's regulatory system and partnering with third parties this can be supercharged;
- 1.2 taxpayer money can be spent more effectively by prioritising high value conservation domains and generating new investment by partnering with Iwi/hapū and business, but for this to work there is a need to modernise rules and processes to make it easier to work with the Department of Conservation;
- 1.3 New Zealand's native forests store 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon, and:
 - 1.3.1 looking after them is one of the largest contributions New Zealand makes to combatting global climate change;
 - 1.3.2 there is the potential to go further through afforestation and restoring wetlands on public conservation land to deliver cheap, long-term and nature-friendly carbon abatement;

2 **agreed** to focus on the following areas to deliver on the Government's priorities for conservation and goals for the economy, climate change, and delivering better public services:

- 2.1 update the conservation regulatory system by progressing legislation to improve performance in processing concessions and permissions;
- 2.2 target investment in high conservation value areas to restore key degraded habitats, support recovery of native species and maximise carbon storage on public conservation land;
- 2.3 generate new revenue and build a more financially sustainable conservation system by 2026, and develop a plan to partner for investment in protecting high value conservation domains in 2025;
- 2.4 build positive working relationships with Iwi/hapū to make the most of their strong and long-term commitment to the environment;

- 3 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to engage with the public on increased flexibility to remove restrictions on the exchange or sale of public conservation land and assets where this would deliver a net benefit to conservation;
- 4 **agreed** that additional conservation revenue will be reinvested in the conservation estate to improve biodiversity, recreation, and heritage.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis (Chair)
Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Judith Collins KC
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Simon Watts
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Hon Melissa Lee
Hon Chris Penk
Hon Nicola Grigg
Hon Mark Patterson
Hon Andrew Bayly
Simon Court MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for ECO

RELEASED BY MINISTER OF CONSERVATION