

MINUTES
NEW ZEALAND WALKING ACCESS COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING
23 September 2020
Wellington/via Zoom

Members: D Cameron (Chair), H Allison, P Coburn, P Henare, H Mexted, C Wade-Brown, R Tipene, L Chase

In attendance: R Cullinane (Chief Executive), P Culling (Deputy Chief Executive), A Wilson-Goldman (Strategic Communications and Partnerships Manager), K Douglas (National Operations Manager), L Edwardson (Principal Advisor – Operations), M Weatherall (Te Araroa Executive Director), S Cruickshank (GIS/IT Manager) and S Day (minutes).

Opening Comments

The meeting commenced at 12.40pm.

P Henare opened the meeting with a karakia.

The Chair welcomed Board members and staff.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Confirm Agenda

The Board confirmed the agenda for the meeting.

The Board noted that although there is no statutory right of public participation to board meetings, as a matter of transparency the Board would support people attending and observing meetings in most circumstances. The Commission will publicise meetings dates on its website so that people can exercise this opportunity if they choose.

2. Confirm Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held via Zoom on 8 July 2020 were circulated and read.

Action: The Board

- a) **confirmed** the minutes of the 8 July 2020 meeting as being a true and correct record of the meeting.

Moved H Mexted

Seconded P Henare

Carried

Matters arising from the minutes

No matters were arising from the minutes.

3. Chief Executive's report

The Board discussed the chief executive's report for September 2020.

R Cullinane gave a strategic summary of the year to September and reported on: the impact from COVID-19; staffing; the 2019/2020 Annual Report and audit; the September Audit and Risk Committee report; Enhanced Access Grant applications; progress with the Māori partnerships strategy; progress with the Te Araroa partnership; the Act Review; regional leadership and strategies; partnerships and policy; IT; health and safety; recent high-level meetings; and potential upcoming collaborative projects.

The Board noted that the Pūhoi to Mangawhai project is a likely Te Araroa segment.

The Board discussed whether there would be increase in applications for Enhanced Access Grants. This will be hard to anticipate as the criteria for the grants has been updated. There has been a huge demand for funding for building track and trail components that are beyond the Commission's means. The main priority of the grant is securing legal access. The Commission expects a significant number of applications meeting this priority but does not have a sense of how many will be received.

The Board congratulated A Wilson-Goldman on getting support from the Waikato District Council for the Connecting Franklin-North Waikato Project.

Action: The Board

a) **discussed** the chief executive's report for September 2020.

Moved D Cameron **Seconded** C Wade-Brown **Carried**

4. Health and safety report

P Culling presented the health and safety report as at September 2020.

This is a regular report, covering any accidents, near misses, on-going issues/any actions taken, initiatives, and any other relevant matters.

There were no accidents and no near misses since the last report.

Action: The Board

a) **noted** the Commission's September 2020 Health and Safety report.

Moved D Cameron **Seconded** L Chase **Carried**

Part A

5. Briefing to the Incoming Minister

A Wilson-Goldman presented a paper asking for Board sign-off on the draft Briefing to the Incoming Minister.

Following the general election, a new government will be formed, and a new executive named, including a Minister with responsibility for the Commission. The Commission must provide a written briefing to the new Minister, outlining the Commission's work and any other areas the Commission wishes to bring to the Minister's attention. The Commission will also seek a meeting for the Board Chair at the earliest opportunity with the Minister, to discuss the Commission's plans for the coming three years.

The draft briefing was prepared based on the Commission's briefing in 2017 with updates to reflect the current situation. Two additions will be added to the draft. NZTA will be added as a key relationship and a note of how our work contributes to the four well-beings. This will include the benefits for the environment and the affordability of walking for most people.

The Board discussed its existing and proposed relationships with iwi and Māori organisations, including which of these should be included in the briefing and how those relationships should be described.

The Board suggested that the briefing should propose extending board member terms. The Board also suggested that the briefing take a stronger position on the impact of budget allocations on the Commission's ability to do more than its current baseline work.

Action: The Board

- a) **approved** the Commission's draft Briefing to the Incoming Minister, pending any additional feedback received from Board members by 30 September.

Moved P Coburn

Seconded C Wade-Brown

Carried

6. Māori Partnership Strategy

P Culling presented the revised Māori Partnership Strategy Framework to the board for approval.

At its meeting on 8 July 2020, the Board directed management to prepare an aspirational high-level framework that outlines the Commission's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. A draft Strategy and draft Strategic Framework for Māori engagement were circulated to the Board on 16 July 2020. A Board workshop was then held on 17 August 2020, and further revisions were made resulting in the revised Māori Partnership Strategy Framework.

The Board discussed whether to endorse the Māori values that Te Araroa has adopted. Further work is needed on a shared approach to values. The Board agreed that there was no need for an external advice and that the Board itself could do the work in-house.

This Board suggested adding this as a regular reporting item at its meetings, with further discussion needed around how best to use the Budget allocation for Māori engagement.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the revised Māori Partnership Strategy Framework and requested some minor changes be made to the Strategy, ready for a final draft to be brought to the Board at its next meeting in November.
- b) **requested** that management prepare a project plan for implementing the three work programmes outlined in the framework.

Moved P Henare

Seconded H Mexted

Carried

7. Annual Report 2019-2020

P Culling presented the draft Annual Report for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, for the Board to comment on, and approve.

The Commission's draft Annual Report for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 was prepared using the Treasury's Guidance and Requirements for Crown Entities, and Audit New Zealand's Model Financial Statements for Crown Entities as well as generally accepted accounting principles. It uses the same format as the previous two Annual Reports.

Audit NZ received a draft of the financial statements and performance information in mid-September. The full audit is scheduled to commence on 12 October, and the Audit and Risk Committee will hold a special meeting with Audit New Zealand on 27 October.

The Commission did well financially when compared with its projected deficit, with the IT systems enabling good business continuity through the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Board suggested that the Chair's message in the Annual Report note the opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic rather than the negatives. It was also suggested that photos used in the report include more people.

Action: The Board

- a) **approved** the Commission's draft Annual Report for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, subject to any changes discussed at the meeting, comments sent through subsequently from Board members, or arising from the special meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee with Audit New Zealand on 27 October.
- b) **designated** L Chase (board member) and D Cameron (board chair) to sign the Annual Report for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, statement of responsibility, financial statements, and letter of representation for, and on behalf of, the Board.

Moved D Cameron

Seconded P Henare

Carried

Part B

8. Q4 Quarterly Report

A Wilson-Goldman presented the Commission's Q4 quarterly report for 2019-2020 as submitted to the Ministry of Primary Industries.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the Commission's Q4 Quarterly Report, as submitted to the Ministry of Primary Industries.

Moved P Henare

Seconded P Coburn

Carried

9. Rebrand update

A Wilson-Goldman updated the Board on the project to develop a new brand for the Commission.

In late August the Commission sent out a Request for Proposals to four full-service design agencies. In October Commission staff will undertake an assessment of proposals, choose a preferred provider, and sign a formal contract for service.

The Board expressed concern about the use of the term brand and suggested it that a better description to describe what the allocated budget is being spent on is identity and strategy.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the update on the project to define a new brand for the Commission.

Moved H Allison

Seconded P Henare

Carried

10. Website update

A Wilson-Goldman updated the Board on recent development of the Commission's website and Find My Adventure tracks and trails search tool.

In August and September new features were introduced, and improvements made to the existing features on the website. The main focuses of this development were improving accessibility and usability.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the update on recent development of the Commission's website.

Moved L Chase **Seconded** H Allison **Carried**

11. Connecting Franklin – North Waikato update

A Wilson-Goldman updated the Board on the Connecting Franklin – North Waikato project.

A Wilson-Goldman and M Weatherall met with Waikato District Council and successfully sought its support for the project. To implement these projects, the Commission has applied for funding totalling \$565,000 over three years from the Waikato River Authority. This funding would be used to recruit a programme manager, and to provide seed funding to undertake their role. The Commission expects to hear the result of this application by mid-October and, if successful, funding would begin 1 January 2021.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the update on the Connecting Franklin – North Waikato project.

Moved H Allison **Seconded** L Chase **Carried**

12. Operations update

K Douglas presented a paper giving the Board an operational update and presented the quarterly case statistics report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020 (Q4 2019-2020).

A recent survey of RFAs was completed to assess confidence and capabilities in key aspects of Māori-Crown relations.

The operations team is continuing to work with RFAs on caseloads and workload pressure. At any given time, there are about 300 active cases. These are not evenly spread among Regional Field Advisors, and the case numbers do not necessarily reflect workload.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the operations update and quarterly case statistics report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020.

Moved P Henare **Seconded** P Coburn **Carried**

13. Audit and Risk Committee

P Culling presented the Board with the deputy chief executive's report as presented to the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting 10 September 2020. This meeting focused on the Annual Report 2019-2020.

The Board discussed the need for a focus on progressing the recommendations arising from the review of the Walking Access Act 2008. Every recommendation required either new funding or legislative change. It is important to make sure they are all addressed individually as part of the policy review. This work should remain at the Board level.

The Board noted the need to consider a long-term strategy for dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 – both the risks and opportunities. This strategy would address how the Commission can mitigate risks and employ opportunities at each alert level.

The Board requested an update on work around stakeholders and partnerships.

Action: The Board

- a) **noted** the deputy chief executive's report from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 10 September 2020.
- b) **directed** management to present a paper on the estimates of work and costs associated with each Act Review recommendation to be presented at the next board meeting.

Moved L Chase

Seconded D Cameron

Carried

14. Unaudited financial results 219-2020

P Culling updated the Board on the unaudited financial results for the financial year ended 30 June 2020.

The unaudited financial statements and supporting information form the basis of the Commission's year-end audit of the financial statements by Audit New Zealand. This will take place during the week beginning 12 October 2020.

The overall financial result for the year ending 30 June 2020 is significantly better than the projected financial result to 30 June 2020 based on pre-COVID-19 conditions. Overall income was down against budget by less than 1 per cent. Expenditure was less than budget by nearly 5 per cent. The major variations were caused by a slow-down of expenditure as the Commission moved to lockdown under Alert Level 4.

Action: The Board

- c) **noted** the Commission's unaudited financial results for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Moved P Henare

Seconded P Coburn

Carried

Part C

15. Other Business

M Weatherall addressed the Board. He noted that the partnership with Te Araroa has now been ongoing for 2.5 months. Tangible progress has been made with the GIS team on mapping, and with the communications team on the new Te Araroa website. Additionally, a closer working relationship with the Regional Field Advisors has helped make good inroads on some smaller projects around the country. The Trust's priority vision for the trail is to get more New Zealanders doing the trail across their lifetime, as well as the overseas through-walkers.

The chair noted the huge opportunity to promote Te Araroa to district councils. Te Araroa passes through 22 district councils, but only has close relationships with 2-3 of these. The Te Araroa regional trusts have an important role to play in building these relationships. A zoom meeting between the Te Araroa trustees and the Board was recommended, to establish and keep the connection between the two groups.

The Board requested a regular updated on Te Araroa at its meetings.

16. Closing comments

The chair thanked R Cullinane for the quality of the board papers.

P Henare closed the meeting with a karakia.

17. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on 25 November 2020 in Wellington (to be confirmed).

The meeting closed at 2.35 pm.

D Cameron

Chairperson