



Briefing to the Incoming Minister 2023

Three key points

1. Outdoor access significantly supports well-being outcomes such as mental and physical health, connecting communities, creating links to te taiao, and sustainable regional economic development. Herenga ā Nuku deals with legal, technical access to the outdoors, and communities then turn that access into walkways, cycleways, adventures, active transport, and recreation.
2. Herenga ā Nuku is legislated to have between 5 and 8 Board members but currently only has 4. Two of those 4 have expired terms.
3. Herenga ā Nuku's draft Statement of Performance Expectations is currently with the Minister's office awaiting your feedback. It contains new outcomes and performance measures.

Background

This briefing provides an overview of Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission and our business.

Herenga ā Nuku is a Crown entity created in 2008. We create and support enduring access to the outdoors for New Zealanders. The Walking Access Act 2008 legislates our work.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) monitors our performance as a Crown entity.

Our Board

We are legislated to have a governing Board of between 5 and 8 members.

Due to resignations by former board members, we currently have 4 Board members, one of whom is about to stand for Parliament and has requested leave to stand aside from her board duties to avoid a conflict of interest during the election period.

Two of those 4 Board members have already seen their terms expire, and the other two have 15 months remaining in their current terms. Appointing or reappointing Board members is an urgent task for you as the incoming responsible minister. MPI will be working with your office to advise on reappointments or replacements.

Board members

Our Board members come from various governance and cultural backgrounds. The current members are:

- **Chair, Don Cameron** – Former Mayor of Ruapehu District and a representative on the national council of Local Government New Zealand. You can reach him at donbcam48@gmail.com or 021 202 7629 Term expired 22 December 2022.
- **Pierre Henare** – (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Hine) Board Chairman and a founding Director of Tairāwhiti Pharmaceuticals Ltd Group. He has also held Board positions with Māori Incorporations, Māori Land Trusts, and the Māori Advisory Boards to Tairāwhiti District Health and Midlands Health. Term expires 5 August 2024
- **Helen Mexted** – Significant strategic leadership and governance experience in public and private sectors, including roles at Te Whatu Ora, Land Information New Zealand, Local Government New Zealand, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Public Trust, and Federated Farmers. Term expires 5 August 2024
- **Celia Wade-Brown** – Former mayor and city councillor in Wellington, Founder of Living Streets Aotearoa, and a Te Araroa Trust and Walk21 trustee. Term expired 17 November 2022.

Our staff

Ric Cullinane is the chief executive. He reports to the Board on the operational matters of Herenga ā Nuku.

You can reach him at ric.cullinane@herengaanuku.govt.nz or 04 815 8509.

We have 12 staff based in the national office in Wellington and 4 working from home in other locations around NZ. We have 12 part-time contractors (~4.5FTE total) working as regional field advisors across New Zealand.

Herenga ā Nuku's work

The two most important parts of our work are:

Working to support public access to the outdoors where it adds the most value to communities

This work involves our regional field advisors and operations team supporting councils, communities and landowners to maintain and enhance public access to the outdoors. This work includes facilitating resolutions to disputes about access, advocating for new access opportunities and supporting communities to design and develop connected networks of outdoor access.

Providing information so that people know how to find access and how to access the outdoors responsibly.

We provide a detailed geospatial information mapping system for free, showing public access areas in NZ. We provide information on different types of public access and how they relate to landholders, recreationists, active transport users and communities.

We also produce the Outdoor Access Code, describing the rights and responsibilities of people who access the outdoors.

Outcomes

In our draft Statement of Performance Expectations, we identify 5 outcomes that we work towards:

Public access to the outdoors is maintained and enhanced

Our network of regional field advisors, based around the country, use their connections and experience to help resolve disputes. They mediate between landholders, recreationalists, local authorities and others. They do not have coercive powers, so disputes can take time to resolve to everyone's satisfaction. However, this time and effort helps to ensure longer-lasting results.

The work we do to achieve this includes:

- Investigating access opportunities – these opportunities come from public enquiries
- Facilitating resolutions to access disputes
- Providing advice and submissions to other agencies on public access issues and policies
- Preparing access recommendations reports for the Overseas Investment Office and supporting the implementation of successful recommendations to create new access
- Partnering with Te Araroa Trust and supporting Te Araroa

Tangata whenua oranga is enhanced through improved outdoor access

We work with tangata whenua to help resolve access disputes about land where they hold mana whenua. We also collaborate to open new trails and restore mana whenua access to wāhi tapu on privately owned land. Working with mana whenua also provides the opportunity to tell the history of the land and the people who have lived on it through the medium of public access.

The work we do to achieve this includes:

- Involving mana whenua in outdoor access issues as they arise
- Supporting the promotion of Māori culture and heritage through public access

Communities are supported to improve outdoor access in their rohe

Herenga ā Nuku works with dozens of volunteer-based trail-building groups across the country. These groups create new access for walkers, cyclists and mountain bikers, often across both publicly and privately owned land. We have established a national network of these groups that meets once a quarter to share ideas and support each other. We provide these groups with advice, support and funding through Enhanced Access Grants. We also share advice on best practice policies, managing volunteers, funding, GIS and website expertise, and help with negotiations to secure legal access.

The work we do to achieve this includes:

- Developing strategies that extend access, recreation, and targeted tourism opportunities at a regional scale
- Attending or hosting workshops and meetings with other government agencies, landholders, mana whenua, organisations and community groups to promote access
- Supporting tracks and trails groups to create, maintain and enhance access to the outdoors

Regional projects

We work closely with local government, iwi partners and community stakeholders to support the development of long-term regional tracks and trails strategies. This work supports goals to grow connectivity and well-being at local community levels in ways that successfully extend access, recreation, and targeted tourism opportunities at a regional scale.

Our work in regional projects includes:

Taranaki: We coordinated the development of a tracks and trails strategy that draws people to Taranaki to journey around the mountain. It outlines a potential network of pathways, biodiversity trails, tourist trails, cycle trails, coastal trails, river crossings and historic trails. People and organisations in Taranaki can use the strategy to plan and inform future funding and development for years to come.

Pūhoi to Mangawhai: This project covers the north of the Auckland region. It partners us with Auckland Council, the Rodney Local Board, Ngāti Manuhiri, and the Matakana Coast Trails. The existing community has a vision for how they want things to be – in 20 years, once tens of thousands of people live in the area, every child should be able to walk, cycle or even horse-ride to school without travelling on the road.

Connecting Franklin – North Waikato: this project covers the southern Auckland and northern Waikato regions between Pukekohe and Rangiriri. It is a partnership with Waikato District Council, Waikato Regional Council and Waikato Tainui and has the support of the Franklin Local Community Board. The project aims to integrate community aspirations and plans to connect fast-growing towns north and south of the Waikato River. It will future-proof connectivity to the outdoors as the population in the area grows.

Tairāwhiti: This project works with Tapuwae Tairāwhiti Trails Trust to form a network of small communities, ahūwhenua land block managers, diverse mana whenua interests, Gisborne cycling commuters, cycle touring and walking advocates, the Gisborne District Council, Waka Kotahi, DOC, and Sport Gisborne-Tairāwhiti. We're connecting with mana whenua working to revitalise ancestral trails and enable journeys to significant places. We plan to support local people to connect to the whenua and link communities through a regional network of tracks, trails and public access.

The benefit of these projects is that they develop comprehensive plans for networks of outdoor access. They create 'shovel-ready' projects for communities. Other regions are keen to initiate projects over the next 12 months.

People have access to accurate information about public access to the outdoors

Herenga ā Nuku provides digital maps to the public. Many people, such as hunters, anglers and trampers, use these maps to seek public access. Community trail-building groups and others wanting to create new access also use them.

The mapping tool draws information from various sources, including Herenga ā Nuku, Land Information New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, local authorities, Fish and Game New Zealand and others.

The Knowledge Base on Herenga ā Nuku's website is a hub for research, guidelines and advice on public access to the outdoors. It provides information in a mix of digital, print and video formats. Herenga ā Nuku's Outdoor Access Code is also hosted here.

The work we do to achieve this includes:

- Identifying public access across all land types
- Managing and publishing free public access maps
- Providing advice on best practices for access to the outdoors

- Maintaining close partnerships with LINZ, DOC and councils to improve geospatial data on outdoor access
- Partnering with Mountain Safety Council to support the Plan My Walk app

Challenges and opportunities

Importance of public access

Walking, running, cycling, and mountain biking are all among the top ten physical activities that New Zealanders participate in, with walking overwhelmingly the most popular activity. Day tramping is 12th, ahead of many common sports activities such as golf, in 13th place.

Public tracks and trails, mainly through walking, offer unparalleled equity of access to all New Zealanders, with no cost barriers, equipment, or pre-planned time commitments required. Walking, running, cycling, and mountain biking offer mental and physical health benefits.

Other benefits include increased community cohesion, and environmental benefits, through forming community groups focussed on replanting, weeding, and predator removal. Public access also offers educational opportunities through sharing stories of places, including our history.

Review of the Walking Access Act 2008

The Walking Access Act 2008, and the Walking Access Commission, were the subject of an independent statutory review in 2019. MPI conducted the review with the support of an expert panel.

The review resulted in the publication of a Report on the Review of the Walking Access Act 2008, tabled in Parliament in September 2019. The report made 30 recommendations and proposed six technical changes to the Walking Access Act.

The report overwhelmingly endorsed Herenga ā Nuku's work and called for more funding to enable it to expand both the breadth and depth of our current work programme.

Herenga ā Nuku has worked to advance recommendations from the report that did not require legislative change or funding. However, recommendations that do require legislative change or funding remain unaddressed. Herenga ā Nuku is currently managing expectations from key stakeholders who engaged with the review in 2019.

A coordinated approach to outdoor infrastructure

One of the central purposes of infrastructure is to help people connect with each other (social cohesion), with places and nature (natural capital). These connections support active transport options, better community health outcomes (human capability), a sustainable, carbon-neutral economy (financial and physical capital) and climate resilience. Many tracks also offer vital connections.

Track and trail infrastructure works best when a community initiates its development. But that community need strong cross-agency government support to support it with its goals for environment and conservation, tourism, health and wellbeing, infrastructure, transport, regional development and local government.

Unfortunately, funding for building and maintaining outdoor access, walkways and cycleways is divided across various providers. This leads to significant inconsistency in opportunities. If a single agency oversaw the funding, development and maintenance of outdoor access for active transport and recreation, it could develop a national strategy for managing, planning and implementing that infrastructure. A national plan could negotiate across boundaries between local authorities, central government agencies, departments, and private landowners.

Te Araroa

In July 2020, Herenga ā Nuku partnered with Te Araroa Trust. The Trust is an independent charitable trust that manages Te Araroa, a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

Te Araroa is an internationally recognised long-distance trail comprised of more than 70 sections collectively walked by hundreds of thousands of people every year, the vast majority of whom are New Zealanders.

The partnership was enabled by \$400,000 in funding received through Budget 2020.

The purpose of the partnership is to improve the trail's route, its management and its promotion.

Key legislation

Eight pieces of legislation govern our work. We also need to consider other acts and regulations as required. The primary legislation we work with are:

- Walking Access Act 2008
- Crown Entities Act 2004
- Overseas Investment Act 2005
- Resource Management Act 1991
- Conservation Act 1987
- Land Transfer Act 1952
- Local Government Act 2002
- Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993
- Treaty of Waitangi settlement legislation

Key accountability documents

Annual Report

Our annual report for the 2021-2022 financial year is available on our website.

Statement of Intent

Our current Statement of Intent 2021-2025 is available on our website. We intend to update this after Budget 2023 and Election 2023.

Statement of Performance Expectations

Our draft Statement of Performance Expectations 2023-2024 is currently with you for feedback. It incorporates new outcomes and performance measures. The final version of the SPE is due to your office by 30 June 2023. You can then table it to Parliament.

Financial and systems

We previously received an annual appropriation of \$1,789,000 from the Crown, as part of Vote Primary Industries. Since Budget 2020, we have received an additional \$1.8M of one-off payments each year, to date to enable Herenga ā Nuku to continue at the same level of activity. Budget 2023 has added \$1.8M to our baseline funding which gives us greater surety. However, inflationary pressures mean that we will need to cut some of our work in the 2023-2024 year and use reserve funding to meet our budget.

Our auditors, Silks Audit, on behalf of the Office of the Auditor General, assesses Herenga ā Nuku's management environment, financial systems, internal controls, and systems and controls for measuring financial and service performance annually. The latest assessment from Silks is that Herenga ā Nuku has very good financial systems and controls, a very good management environment, and very good performance information and associated systems and controls.

Herenga ā Nuku will continue to submit cost-pressure budget bids for inflation during the Government's annual estimates process.