

15 July 2019

LGOIMA No. 8140004916, 49217, 4932
(Please quote this in any correspondence)

Tom Austen

Sent by email: fyi-request-9998-5f24861e@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Tom

Local Government Official Information And Meetings Act 1987
**Budget for track upgrades and kauri dieback research, and advice on
closure of the Waitākere Ranges**

This response relates to your most recent requests for information regarding the budget and expenditure on track upgrades, kauri dieback research, and the advice provided by staff on the closure of the Waitākere Ranges.

Your requests and our responses are set out separately below:

1. Request #8140004916

(a) “Now that the council has identified the tracks to be upgraded in the 2019/2020 financial year, I would like more detailed information on how this money is to be spent. For example, how much is budgeted for each track.”

The budget information provided to you in response to your request #8140004405 referred to the capital budget for track improvement work in the Waitākere and Hunua Ranges regional parks, as well other council-managed parks where there are tracks through kauri forest.

The budget for track upgrade works in regional parks for the 2019/2020 year is **\$6,513,000** (compared to \$2,000,000 for the 2018/2019 year).

The capital budget for track upgrade works in council-managed local parks for the 2019/2020 financial year is **\$3,320,000** (compared to \$2,500,000 for the 2018/2019 year).

The budgets are determined based on the estimated work required in each location. This is not strictly allocated on a per track basis, as the actual costs for track upgrades are not finalised until the procurement process is completed.

Also, in some locations more work may be undertaken (and funded) by the local board in addition to the planned track upgrade, where this work will add to the existing ecological or amenity value of the site.

In addition to the track capital budgets there is also additional operational budget allocated for ensuring open tracks and hygiene stations are maintained to enable continued use.

The budgets cover track improvement works to upgrade tracks to a kauri dieback safe standard.

A National Pest Management Plan is currently being developed for kauri dieback, by the Ministry for Primary Industries-lead national programme, and is expected to be operational in October 2019. This plan includes national kauri dieback track standards which set minimum requirements that Auckland Council will be required to comply with in all track upgrades carried out in both regional and local parks.

The track reopening work programme 2019-2024 for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park has recently been published on the council's website and is available on this link:

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/media/27633/wrrp-track-reopening-work-programme-2019-2024.pdf>

The forward work programme for the 2019/2020 financial year for managing tracks within local parks is under development.

Across the region local parks have been prioritised for track upgrades based on kauri ecosystem value and recreational use. Five local board areas have been categorised as high priority for kauri mitigation on local parks. These are Kaipātiki, Rodney, Upper Harbour, Waiheke, and Waitākere Ranges local board areas.

Fieldwork has been completed to inform the scope of work required for track upgrades in these priority areas, and the draft scoping documents and preliminary cost estimates for capital works are being prepared.

It is not possible to indicate how much has been budgeted for each track until this scoping work has been completed and agreed by the local boards. This is because additional work may be proposed and funded by the local board, to extend the track upgrades to improve recreational access or provide a greater level of protection to ecological areas.

(b) "I would also like to know how much has been budgeted for kauri dieback research in the 2019/2020 financial year."

A total of \$440,000 has been budgeted for the kauri dieback treatment and research workstream in the 2019/2020 financial year.

The research funded by Auckland Council is focused on local operational testing of possible disease mitigation methods, for example phosphite injections.

2. Request #8140004917

(a) "I request the names and job descriptions of the people in the Regional Parks team (who are developing a detailed five-year track upgrade programme for council-owned land)."

The Western Regional Parks team comprises 26 staff, led by one Principal Ranger. There are 4 Senior Rangers, 20 Rangers and 1 Programme Support position within the team. Please note that not all staff within the Western team provide input into the development of the track upgrade programme.

We are refusing your request to provide the names of the staff in the Regional Parks Western team, in accordance with section 7(2)(f)(ii) of the Act. We consider it is necessary to protect these employees from improper pressure or harassment, given the range of public views about the track closures and reopening programme and the fact that some of the staff both live and work in the local area.

There have been occasions where staff have been approached at their private home address, outside of work hours, by members of the public wanting to discuss these issues, which is not appropriate as the staff involved are not the decision makers.

(b) “I request any information, advice or reports written or provided by Regional Parks Western team about the closure of the Waitākere Ranges due to kauri dieback. particularly interested in this information from before December 2017.”

There are no written reports provided by the Western Regional Parks team regarding the closure of the Waitākere Ranges. Staff from both the Regional Parks and Biosecurity teams were involved in internal meetings to discuss the proposal to close the ranges prior to December 2017, however there are no written minutes of these meetings.

The Parks team provided input on the practical implications of the closures, while the Biosecurity team provided technical advice on the proposed closure and considerations related to the requirements to comply with standards of the Controlled Area Notice under the Biosecurity Act.

The advice provided by the Western Regional Parks team relates specifically to the operational aspects of the closure, for example, signage requirements, fencing and gates; their advice does not refer to the actual decision to close the park.

The collective advice provided by staff on the closure is captured in the agenda report provided to the Environment and Community Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2017, and subsequent reports provided in February and April 2018.

We have already provided you with a copy of these reports.

(c) “In reference to the Waitakere Ranges Local Board meeting in April 2019, Item [13] of the agenda headed Approval of local park closures in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board area (File No: CP 2019/0451), paragraph 15 in the report contained a diagram showing the timeline to reopen these tracks. Reference is made in this diagram to key external stakeholders. I would like to know who they are and how they were selected.”

This information also answers your request **#8140004405**.

The key external stakeholders referred to in this diagram are the community groups that undertake weed control, pest management and some track maintenance in the parks. They were selected on the basis that the work they undertake for the community will be affected directly by the proposed closures.

An example is the South Titirangi Neighbourhood Network, which has its own website: <http://southtitirangi.wixsite.com/auckland>

Staff from our kauri dieback team are available to meet with you to discuss any further questions you may have. Please contact me if to arrange a suitable time for a meeting.

3. Request #8140004932

(a) I would like to know what the Parks department’s track upgrade budget for the 2018/2019 financial year was. How was this spent?

Thank you for clarifying by email on 15 June that your request is for the track upgrade budget for kauri dieback work.

The Regional Parks budget for kauri dieback track upgrades for the 2018/2019 financial year was \$2,000,000 (compared to \$6,513,000 for the 2019/2020 year).

The local parks budget for kauri dieback track upgrade work for the 2018/2019 financial year was \$2,500,000 (compared to \$3,320,000 for the 2019/2020 year).

Please refer to the memo provided to the Environment and Community Committee meeting on 12 June 2019 (refer **Attachment 1**) for an overview of both the maintenance and track upgrade work completed in both local and regional parks.

If you feel that we have not responded adequately to your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you have any further queries, please contact me on (09) 301 0101 quoting LGOIMA No. 8140004916, 4917, 4932.

Yours sincerely



Joanne Kearney
Privacy & LGOIMA Business Partner
Democracy Services

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