



OIA 19-E-0860
DOC-6166796

29 January 2020

John Luke
fyi-request-11888-0505b769@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Luke

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 14 December 2019. You requested information related to a number of items recorded in the minutes of the Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee meeting of 7 October 2019. Your request is summarised as the following:

1. *In relation to agenda item 12, the 2018-2019 annual report:*
 - a. *Has the annual report been drafted?*
 - b. *Has the annual report been sent to the Minister of Conservation?*
 - c. *If not, when will it be sent to the Minister and when will it become publicly available?*

2. *In relation to agenda item 13, the Operations Director's report concerning property maintenance:*
 - a. *What was explained at the meeting by the Department?*
 - b. *A copy of the property maintenance plan.*

3. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning a wetland:*
 - a. *What is the Department's response to the point made by Taryn Wilks about involving youth and community groups?*

4. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning boats coming to Great Barrier Island from Coromandel Harbour:*
 - a. *Has the discussion proposed by Judy Gilbert happened?*
 - b. *If it has, information about the outcome of that discussion.*

5. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning a biosecurity plan:*
 - a. *A copy of the biosecurity plan.*

6. *In relation to agenda item 15, the permissions report concerning a permit application from the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences:*
 - a. *What is the Department's response about why a permit was required?*
 - b. *What has been clarified?*

7. *In relation to agenda item 17, the financial report:*
 - a. *A copy of the financial report that was tabled at the meeting.*
 - b. *The Department's response to the question asked by Taryn Wilks about the use of the Advisory Committee's budget to pay for advertising.*

8. *In relation to agenda item 18, dates and venues for 2019-2020 meetings:*
 - a. *What was confirmed and what are the proposed dates and venues for meetings in 2019-2020?*

9. *In relation to agenda item 8, policies concerning attendance by the public at Advisory Committee meetings:*
 - a. *How does the Advisory Committee invite members of the public to attend meetings?*
 - b. *Where can the public get information about future meeting dates and venues?*

On 20 December 2019 I wrote to you seeking evidence of your eligibility to request information under the Official Information Act. I received your email dated 8 January 2020 in which you provided a statement that you are a New Zealand citizen and reside in New Zealand.

In this instance I have decided to proceed and respond to your request for information. However, for any future requests to the Department of Conservation we will require further evidence in the form of the information identified in my letter of 20 December 2019, in support of your statement of eligibility. It is important that we receive evidence from you as we have received a number of requests recently, including via the FYI website, where upon investigation we have discovered that the requestors do not have a connection to New Zealand and are not eligible under the Act. While we may still provide a response, we must balance the resources required to respond with the public interest in ineligible requests.

On 20 December 2019 I also wrote to you to advise you that I have transferred Part 5 of your request to the Auckland Council.

Your requests and our responses are listed below:

1. *In relation to agenda item 12, the 2018-2019 annual report:*
 - a. *Has the annual report been drafted?*
 - b. *Has the annual report been sent to the Minister of Conservation?*
 - c. *If not, when will it be sent to the Minister and when will it become publicly available?*

- a. The annual report for the 2018/2019 year has been prepared by the Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee.
- b. The annual report was sent to the Minister of Conservation on 6 December 2019.
- c. The annual report from the Advisory Committee has not previously been made public.

I enclose a copy of the 2018/2019 annual report for your information. The following document therefore falls within the scope of your request and is attached:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	September 2019	Annual report	Released in full

2. *In relation to agenda item 13, the Operations Director's report concerning property maintenance:*
 - a. *What was explained at the meeting by the Department?*
 - b. *A copy of the property maintenance plan.*
 - a. The Department's representatives who were in attendance at the meeting explained how property such as offices and staff houses were managed by the Department. The Department's regional and district managers are supported by a national property management team based in our Wellington office which provides support and advice for property portfolio management, including matters such as relocations, furniture supply, and repairs and maintenance. The representatives further explained that a backlog of overdue maintenance on a number of such properties in the Auckland Operations Region had been identified and that a plan was being developed with the national team to address this backlog of work.
 - b. The Department does not have a single "property maintenance plan". The maintenance requirements for any one property may be held in a number of places including asset registers, stand-alone documents, or in a national database. I regret that I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information does not exist.
3. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning a wetland:*
 - a. *What is the Department's response to the point made by Taryn Wilks about involving youth and community groups?*

- a. The Department's representatives who were in attendance at the meeting did not respond during the meeting to the point made by Advisory Committee member Taryn Wilks. Nor has the Department since developed a response to the point although it has been noted as a suggestion. I regret that I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information does not exist.
4. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning boats coming to Great Barrier Island from Coromandel Harbour:*
- a. *Has the discussion proposed by Judy Gilbert happened?*
 - b. *If it has, information about the outcome of that discussion.*
- a. The Department does not have any information about whether or not the discussion proposed by Advisory Committee member Judy Gilbert has taken place. I regret that I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information does not exist.
 - b. My response to part (a) of this part of your request refers.
5. *In relation to agenda item 14, the Operations Manager's report concerning a biosecurity plan:*
- a. *A copy of the biosecurity plan.*

As noted above on 20 December 2019 I transferred this part of your request to the Auckland Council.

6. *In relation to agenda item 15, the permissions report concerning a permit application from the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences:*
- a. *What is the Department's response about why a permit was required?*
 - b. *What has been clarified?*
- a. The Department's representatives who were in attendance at the meeting explained that a permit is required for all research activities before they can be undertaken on public conservation land, as specified in the relevant legislation. As an aside note that information about the requirements for permits for research activities can be found on the Department's website at this link: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/apply-for-permits/researchers/>.
 - b. The legislative requirement that all research activities require a permit before they can be undertaken on public conservation land was clarified by the Department's representatives at the meeting.

7. *In relation to agenda item 17, the financial report:*
- a. *A copy of the financial report that was tabled at the meeting.*
 - b. *The Department's response to the question asked by Taryn Wilks about the use of the Advisory Committee's budget to pay for advertising.*
- a. The Department's financial report for the period 1 July 2019-30 August 2019 was tabled at the meeting. It has since been inserted into the copy of the agenda papers for the meeting that are available on the Department's website at this link: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/aotea-conservation-park-advisory-committee/>. The report is on page 41 of the agenda papers (note that it is incorrectly identified in the agenda papers as Agenda Item 15 – it was in fact Agenda Item 17). I regret that I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Official Information Act as the information is publicly available.
- b. The Department's representatives who were in attendance at the meeting did not respond during the meeting to the suggestion made by Advisory Committee member Taryn Wilks. The approved budget for the Advisory Committee, which is set out in the financial report referred to in (a) above, does not explicitly provide for paid advertising of meetings. The Department uses a small part of the budget to pay for publication of a public notice in the island's main newspaper, the *Barrier Bulletin*, ahead of each meeting to inform island residents of the date, time and venue of each meeting.
8. *In relation to agenda item 18, dates and venues for 2019-2020 meetings:*
- a. *What was confirmed and what are the proposed dates and venues for meetings in 2019-2020?*
- a. The dates and venues for the remaining meetings of the Advisory Committee in the 2019-2020 year were not confirmed at the meeting. A meeting was subsequently held on 6 December 2019 at Claris. The agenda papers for this meeting are publicly available on the Department's website at the link provided above in my response to Part 7 of your request. The next meeting will be held in February 2020, but the date and venue have not yet been decided. Dates and venues for remaining meetings in 2020 will be determined at the February meeting.
9. *In relation to agenda item 8, policies concerning attendance by the public at Advisory Committee meetings:*
- a. *How does the Advisory Committee invite members of the public to attend meetings?*

b. *Where can the public get information about future meeting dates and venues?*

- a. At its meeting the Advisory Committee reconfirmed its policy of holding its meetings in public. The Department services the Advisory Committee and undertakes any tasks necessary to inform the public of meetings. At present the main method is to publish a public notice of upcoming meetings in the island's newspaper, as explained in my response to Part 7 of your request above.
- b. The public can obtain information about future meeting dates and venues in three ways. They can contact the Department through our office on Great Barrier to request information. They can read about upcoming meeting dates and venues in the agenda papers for each meeting once they are posted on the Department's website. As noted above they can also read a notification of an upcoming meeting in a public notice published in the island's newspaper, the *Barrier Bulletin*, normally placed in the publication prior to each meeting.

Dates and venues for meetings is a standard agenda item for each meeting and the relevant report is updated for each meeting. Sometimes the report will contain proposals for meeting dates and venues for the Advisory Committee to consider, and sometimes the report will contain dates and venues that have been considered and confirmed by the Advisory Committee. The current advisory committee have not yet confirmed dates and venues for upcoming meetings in 2020.

As a further option, we may consider adding information about dates and venues for future meetings to the webpage on the Department's website.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decisions by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact George Taylor, Operations Manager Aotea/Great Barrier Island on 09 429 0044 or by email greatbarrier@doc.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Baucke
Director Operations, Auckland