

5 October 2016

Izzy Fordham
Chairperson
Great Barrier Local Board
By email: izzy.fordham@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Dear Izzy

Re: Support for International Dark-Sky Association Accreditation for Dark-Sky Sanctuary Status on Aotea Great Barrier Island

I have been advised that the Great Barrier community and Local Board are working together on an exciting new project to achieve Dark-Sky Sanctuary Accreditation for Aotea Great Barrier Island. I wish to fully support this proposal.

I understand that preliminary sky brightness measurements by the Auckland Astronomical Society (ASS) on Aotea Great Barrier Island are the best in the Auckland region, such that it has an excellent chance of being awarded Dark-Sky Sanctuary status matching the higher Gold standard for a Dark Sky Reserve enjoyed by Tekapo. This is an excellent outcome.

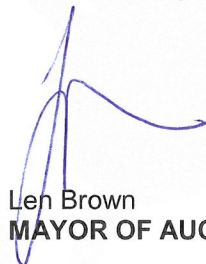
Aotea Great Barrier Island is in a unique position in the Auckland region to be a sanctuary and to protect its dark sky as it has no reticulated electricity so no street lights or lit advertising, a very small permanent population of about 940 and around 70% of its land area held by the Department of Conservation and Auckland Council in public reserve.

A successful dark sky accreditation and sanctuary status would provide a huge impetus for Aotea Great Barrier Island to advance a number of complementary initiatives. The recent "is there anybody out there" event attracted huge national and international interest and has significantly increased interest in this proposal. The Great Barrier Local Board also has aspirations and initiatives outlined in its local board plan. These include showcasing alternative energy use exemplified in very successful "off the grid" events being held on island over the last two years.

The local board plan also identified increasing visitor numbers as an essential component of the island's economic future, and I know the board sees tourists who come to see things aligned with the island's aspirations as being important. This initiative would go a long way to advancing that by enabling the island's night sky to be enjoyed by everyone. I understand potential new local, national and international visitors could include astrophotographers, scientists and students. Stargazing and astrotourism fits in very well with the nature/eco-friendly tourism already being promoted by the island.

The Auckland Council Unitary Plan lighting policy highlights the need to minimise the loss of night sky viewing. I fully support this venture as it is something new, bold and incredibly worthwhile, not only for Great Barrier Island but also the wider Auckland region.

Yours sincerely



Len Brown
MAYOR OF AUCKLAND