



## Aotea Great Barrier Local Board: Update - 1 August, 2017

Dear Izzy, Luke, Sue, Shirley and Jeff,

When June and I met you on behalf of the trust on 21 June, we noted that we look forward to future workshops and discussions relating to the environment and emerging opportunities, including:

1. The Predator Free NZ 2025 and Pest Free Auckland opportunities
2. Aotea Great Walk/s as a cornerstone of ecological tourism and employment
3. Southern Sanctuary and Rangitawhiri Reserve (building on the Mulberry Grove project, private landowner pest control and Little Windy Hill's experience)
4. Research and education partnerships, including with the University of Auckland

We would like to reiterate that we will support the board to progress any of the above issues. However, since that meeting, we have become aware of increasing levels of interest in a predator free Aotea in particular, including at Auckland Council and within the Department of Conservation, Predator Free NZ and from Nikki Kaye.

While this interest is very encouraging, and recognises the Barrier's value to NZ and the Auckland region, we would like to see much greater focus on a community lead conversation as discussions and options are explored. We have begun to think about how this might be done and shared some thinking with Sue Daly and Izzy Fordham recently.

GBIET recommended in our submission to the board's 3 year plan **facilitating an on-island hui before the end of 2017**. We discussed that this could comprise the board, Ngati Rehua Ngati Wai Ki Aotea, DOC, Predator Free NZ, Auckland Council officers, the Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee, the research and scientific community, key current and potential funders and Great Barrier community members and groups that share the goal of a pest free island.

While such a gathering would bring together the partnership needed to progress successfully, we think the more important priority is for the community conversation to develop. We believe there are very probably more people per head of population doing pest management on Great Barrier than any other place in New Zealand. People are going about it in their own way and the work Judy Gilbert is doing at Windy Hill and the Econode technology are two examples of the excellence and innovation that can be driven on and from the island.

Elizabeth (Biz) Bell is well known to islanders and the board for her dedication over 20 years to working with taiko/black petrels on Hirakimata. Biz has just presented to a global conference in the UK: *"It's not all up in the air"* - a summary of her work in pest eradications on inhabited islands all over the world, in which she is rapidly becoming an authority. These are community driven projects that do not involve aerial poison drops. Biz is prepared to come to the island and share her learnings after 22 November (she is currently running another project in the Caribbean).

There is a lot of pest management activity in the pipeline on the island. It includes the eradication of rats from Rakitu due in winter 2018, and from Te Paparahi in planning, increased pest management proposed for Hirakimata and community projects in Okiwi and Mulberry Grove, on top of the existing sanctuaries and private projects. We would therefore like the board to consider what you feel should be the next steps. These may include:

- How to prepare for possible reactions to the level of interest in predator free status coming from off island
- The Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee meeting on 14 August is an opportunity for the board to share its perspective with ACPAC members
- Various people have suggested an on-island version of Auckland Council's successful "Pestival" which GBIET, Glenfern Sanctuary and Econode attended on 24 June. Seminars by Biz and others with Barrier experience could anchor such an event.
- Could a communications plan be put together to help build conversations and knowledge in the community over the coming months (so that people have the facts).

### ***Other updates***

June Brookes has written a separate letter to you regarding the need to focus on plague skinks. It is possible that people may simply be unaware of the risk of bringing plants to the island with skink eggs or skinks in them. Is this something the board is or could look into building more community awareness on, in addition to the follow up by Auckland Council teams at Rogers and other key garden centres?

Finally, we also note for the board's attention the following new trustees of GBIET:

- **Matt Way:** Matt lives in Tryphena and is co-founder with Scott Sambell of Econode, and known to the board through the Mulberry Grove School pest control project. He is also supporting other pest projects on the island and elsewhere in NZ and offshore. Matt reports he has successfully made contact with Ophir School in the Orkney Islands – alongside Mulberry Grove school they will be running projects and comparing learning about results in the community and environment.
- **George Perry:** Professor in terrestrial ecology in the School of Environment at the University of Auckland. George has spent a lot of time on the island with groups of students and we are fortunate to have the experience and networks he brings to the trust to support future projects (especially with kakariki and kereru).
- We note that **John Ogden** has retired as a trustee but remains our Science Advisor.

I am unsure if we are able to join you at your meeting and may need to look at a phone option. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Kate Waterhouse*

**Chair, Great Barrier Island Environmental Trust**

**1 August 2017**