

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HEARINGS PANEL.

### VARIATION TO REGIONAL PARKS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2010 - SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ZONE POLICIES TAITOMO

#### *Description*

Taitomo is an area of land at the southern end of Piha Beach. Its deep valley systems are contained by the steep slopes of the Te AhuAhu ridge to the south and east and terminate at coastal cliffs along its western edge. The area contains a sandy beach known as 'the gap' and a coastal blowhole which is a unique visitor attraction.

The land contains areas of mature native bush containing Kauri and endemic Kowhai and areas of coastal vegetation, including native forget-me-not and a herbfield of *sellierarepens*, known as the 'tennis court'. Much of the northern coastal portion of the land consists of low scrubland infested with gorse, climbing asparagus and other weed species that are vulnerable to fire.

The area is significant to Maori in terms of the relationship they have with their culture, traditions, ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga. Taitomo island and the surrounding area is sacred to Te Kawerau o Maki and is administered by them as kaitiaki; guardians for future generations.

Taitomo was purchased in 2014 as an addition to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park in order to protect its wilderness qualities, high natural values and cultural significance and to provide a missing link on the Hillary Trail between Mercer Bay tracks and the Tasman Lookout Track at Piha.

#### *Management framework*

Taitomo will be managed within the context of the policies contained in the Regional Parks Management Plan 2010, and in particular the policies contained in Section 17 relating to the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. It will be managed in a manner consistent with the vision for the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and the principles and purpose of Waitakere Ranges Heritage Protection Act 2008. Particular note will be taken of Section 17.19.5 Policies 1 – 48 to ensure the management of Taitomo is consistent with these policies. Special note will also be taken of policies 10.4.4.1-2 relating to the prevention of the spread of Kauri-dieback disease and the findings of the Kauri Dieback Report 2017.

Taitomo forms part of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and contributes to the vision for

the Waitakere Ranges as a regional conservation and scenic park that is managed to protect and enhance its unique, natural, cultural and historic values and wilderness qualities, to provide a place of respite for the people of Auckland, to provide for a range of compatible recreational activities in natural settings, and to cultivate an ethic of stewardship.

The management of Taitomo will place emphasis on the protection and enhancement of its wilderness qualities and its natural features, with limited and controlled visitor access to the 'gap', the blowhole, the 'tennis court' and the Hillary Trail which offers spectacular coastal vistas for key lookout points. Visitor infrastructure will be kept to the minimum necessary to facilitate safe access to key points of interest to visitors on the site and will be low key and constructed using natural materials, where practicable.

### *Management focus*

The primary management focus of Taitomo will be the collaborative protection and enhancement of its wilderness qualities and natural features, while recognising and providing for the ancestral relationship that Maori have with this area. This will include the restoration of its ecology, access safety and signage that promotes awareness and protection of its outstanding heritage values.

This approach enables visitors to experience the wild nature of Taitomo with its unique heritage features in a dramatic natural landscape while undertaking informal recreation. Visitor safety will be a priority as Taitomo contains features such as coastal cliffs, steep slopes, narrow tracks and waahi tapu that pose a considerable level of risk to visitors.

While some safety structures will be installed at critical points, and visitors will be informed by way of signage of the potential dangers on entering these sites, it is provided to inform visitors that they must take responsibility for their own personal safety. Kia Tupato is a warning of caution that requires visitors to read and respect the information provided relating to the mana whenua stories and messages that are designed to protect visitor wellbeing.

Visitor's access to the area is on foot. The Hillary Trail and tracks provide walking access to the beach at the Gap, the blowhole, 'tennis court' and key lookout points offering spectacular coastal views. Supporting visitor infrastructure will be kept to a minimum to protect the area's natural and cultural qualities and is designed to have a low impact on the environment.

### *Policies*

1. Instigate protection in perpetuity of Taitomo by Order in Council under Section 139 of the Local Government Act 2002.

2. Manage Taitomo and the Tasman and Gap Lookouts Special Management Zones as an integrated unit.
3. As a priority, develop a vegetation management plan in consultation with the Waitakere Ranges Local Board, adjoining landowners, iwi, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, and special interest groups, and implement a vegetation management and enhancement programme that;
  - a) Focuses on the control of pest plant species across the Taitomo and Tasman and Gap Lookouts Special Management Zones, an immediate priority being the control of fire-prone species (such as gorse) along track edges and property boundaries, with consideration given to fire resistant plants;
  - b) Instigates revegetation in eco-sourced native plants suitable for a high risk fire coastal environment progressively across the Taitomo and Tasman and Gap Lookouts Special Management Zones;
  - c) Maintains a representative and viable portion of the herb field for its botanic and historic importance as a visitor feature with appropriate levels of protection and interpretation;
  - d) Undertakes pest plant control in a manner aligned with community initiatives that have the objective of making Piha pest plant free; and
  - e) Investigates and, if practicable, restores the former dammed waterway to its natural state.
4. Survey for the presence of Kauri dieback disease and develop and implement a programme in accordance with Policy 10.4.4.1 - 2 for kauri dieback prevention and control by avoiding tracks within the vicinity of the existing kauri trees and incorporating phytosanitary stations where necessary to prevent the spread of the disease.
5. Develop and implement protection measures for wildlife frequenting and breeding in the area, such as *fern birds*, *little blue penguin* and *grey-faced petrel*.
6. Manage archaeological and cultural sites in accordance with Section 11 of the Regional Parks Management Plan by;
  - a) Undertaking further iwi engagement and surveys to determine the extent of archaeological and cultural sites

- b) Exercising the Accidental Discovery Protocols with respect to all development projects
  - c) In collaboration with Te Kawerau a Maki develop strategies and actions that prevents visitors gaining access to Taitomo island
7. Undertake a staged track construct programme as shown in the concept plan that;
- a) Completes, as a priority, the Hillary Trail link between the Mercer Bay Loop Track and the Tasman Lookout Track consistent with the objectives for the Hillary Trail (Refer Section 17.19.5 Policies 106-109);
  - b) Utilises previously disturbed alignments and in areas of low fire risk, including maintaining the existing service road as a pedestrian and service vehicle link only.
  - c) Ensures new track links are only constructed once the fire risk has been reduced through the replacement of weed species with suitable native plants;
  - d) The loop track on the northern ridge-line will not be developed beyond the first lookout until significant ecological restoration has been undertaken in the area it traverses and a fire risk assessment has been undertaken;
  - e) Constructs tracks from materials which reflects their natural settings and with the aim of low visual impact on the environment in accordance with the Piha Design Guidelines and the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Design Guidelines;
  - f) Relocates the track between the 'gap' and the 'tennis court' away from the edge of the blowhole for safety reasons;
  - g) Utilises boardwalks to reduce the impact on the herb field vegetation;
  - h) Ensures safety barriers, boardwalks and lookout structures are installed only at locations shown on the concept plan using low profile and unobtrusive structures, such as post and wire fences, and materials consistent with the Piha Design Guidelines and the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Design Guidelines; and
  - i) Undertakes monitoring of the impact of visitor activity to ensure sensitive environments are not damaged and take appropriate action, such as temporary closures or redirection of visitor activity, when adverse impacts occur.
8. Monitor the need for additional parking to serve visitor activity at Taitomo and prepare a development plan for public consultation if a need is proved, giving consideration to

additional vehicle parking at the end of Log Race Road and/or off Piha Road on the central service road on Taitomo.

9. Policies 17.19.5.28 – 30 will apply at Taitomo with the following limits
  - 3 organised sports events over 50 persons per year
  - 2 filming events
  - No weddings, parties and concerts.
10. Prohibit dogs and mountain bikes in order to maintain the wilderness qualities and protect native wildlife species, such as *little blue penguins*.
11. Install visitor information, safety signage and interpretation of the natural and cultural features of the area, at the main entrance points, at the entrance to the blowhole and at the 'tennis court' herb field (such as Kia tupato – waahi tapu (please take care when visiting this location as this is a culturally sensitive site)).
12. Ensure Taitomo is conveniently served by toilet facilities by ensuring;
  - a) the location of existing toilets are clearly signposted at car parks and main track entrances;
  - b) the need for any additional toilet facilities is kept under review and that toilets will be constructed if a need is demonstrated; and
  - c) any additional toilet facilities are located in a discrete location and are designed and constructed of materials which blend into the natural setting consistent with the Piha Design Guidelines and the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Design Guidelines.
13. Develop and implement a fire risk management strategy in consultation with Fire and Emergency New Zealand including the following;
  - a) Maintaining the existing service roads for Fire and Emergency access;
  - b) Maintaining the existing roadside catchment dam at the service road entrance on Piha Rd (on private property);
  - c) Maintaining the existing dipping dam (near service road);
  - d) Maintaining the existing water tank on Te AhuAhu Rd;
  - e) Installing 2 x new 20,000 litre water tanks with a feeder pipe to the grass area near

The Gap and ensure the tanks are screened from overlooking private properties;

- f) Targeting vegetation control of flammable species, revegetation planting using fire retardant species; and
  - g) Ensuring on-going track and service road maintenance to control vegetation growth to create fire reduction zones (fire breaks)
14. Actively maintain engagement with Te Kawerau a Maki and other iwi who may have an association on all matters relating to the management and development of Taitomo.
  15. Coordinate pest, animal and plant control measures that complement the vegetation enhancement programme with those of the Waitakere Ranges Local Board in consultation with adjoining landowners.
  16. Actively engage and maintain liaison, and where appropriate coordinate management programmes, with local initiatives being undertaken by key community groups, such as Piha Resident and Ratepayers Association, Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, Piha Coastcare, Protect Piha Heritage Society and Friends of the Regional Parks.
  17. Facilitate a volunteer programme for pest animal and plant control, replanting programmes and the management of the herb field.