

Memo

17 June 2019

To: Local Board Members

cc: Local Board Advisors and Senior Local Board Advisors
Kataraina Maki – General Manager Community and Social Policy
Mark Bowater – Head of Parks Services
Gael Ogilvie – General Manager Environmental Services
Mark Bishop – Watercare Services

From: Bryce Pomfrett, Service Development Manager, Service Strategy and Integration

Subject: **Walking Access Act 2008 Review**

Context/Background

The Ministry of Primary Industries is reviewing the Walking Access Act 2008 (the Act). This legislation governs the work of the New Zealand Walking Access Commission - Ara Hīkoi Aotearoa. As part of this review, public feedback is sought on the current Act and the Walking Access Commission. There will be a subsequent formal submission opportunity should this feedback result in legislative changes.

The Act can be found here:

<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2008/0101/latest/DLM1244016.html>

Further information on the review can be found here:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/law-and-policy/legislation/walkingaccessreview/>

Summary of Walking Access Commission Role

The Walking Access Act 2008 set up the New Zealand Walking Access Commission, which:

- provides information to the public about where public access is available across New Zealand
- helps groups across the country develop free tracks, trails and areas. The work the Commission does to develop new access is generally done where opportunities arise – such as through an active local group wanting support, when a property is undergoing Overseas Investment Office consenting, or a landowner is wanting to offer access.
- works at a strategic level with councils and local stakeholders to develop landscape wide public access plans
- negotiates when users and landowners disagree about access.

Current Interaction between Auckland Council and Walking Access Commission

Until recently Auckland Council has primarily worked with the Walking Access Commission to provide information to support consideration of Overseas Investment Office applications, and to respond to specific access queries.

More recently, project partnerships have been progressed between the Walking Access Commission, the Rodney and Franklin Local Boards and local community groups with a desire to extend trail networks in these areas. In Rodney this has resulted in the creation of the Programme

Manager – Pūhoi to Pakiri role – a jointly funded role between the council and Walking Access Commission, focussing on realising community aspirations in this area. Additionally, the Walking Access Commission has been leading a joint trail strategy in the North Waikato / Franklin area (*Connecting Franklin – North Waikato*) and supporting community trail aspirations in Beachlands / Maraetai and Clevedon.

Additionally, the Walking Access Commission has been involved in discussions with council staff to consider the implications of kauri dieback related closures on public access opportunities.

Likely Themes for Feedback

While not a formal submission process, key themes of feedback are proposed to be provided as council feedback to the Act review. Likely themes for feedback suggested by staff to date include:

- Support for increasing of public access to the outdoors for recreational purposes and the role of the Walking Access Commission in overseeing this
- Support for the role that public access plays in environmental and economic initiatives
- Ensuring the Walking Access Act provides mechanisms that enable local community groups (particularly in urban fringe, rural and Gulf Islands areas) to promote and develop more public walking, cycling and equestrian access
- Support for the Walking Access easements, and extending this opportunity over unformed legal roads
- Extend funding opportunities available to community-based trail groups – for example through the New Zealand Cycle Trail.

Staff are seeking support or alternative views from Local Boards on these themes above, or others which may have been missed.

Feedback timetable

Preparation of a draft feedback	June 2019
Circulation of draft feedback to local boards	Tuesday, 25 June 2019
Feedback received from local boards and incorporated into final feedback	By 1 July 2019
Closing date for feedback	2 July 2019

Next steps

Staff will prepare draft feedback and circulate to local boards by Tuesday 25 June 2019 for comment. Please note that due to tight timeframes this may not align with scheduled local board business meetings and any inputs from local boards may need to either be delegated or utilise the urgent decision process.