

Submission on the Draft 2017 /2018 Annual Plan

27 March 2017

From: Friends of Maungawhau Inc.

To: Auckland Council and Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority

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This submission relates to the Annual Plan in general and to all the Tāmaki Makaurau maunga, in particular Maungawhau. It is based on our 20 years' experience on Maungawhau. (See our 2014 publication *Maungawhau: A Short History of Volunteer Action*.)

We are concerned about the increased use of Maungawhau, with eroded tracks and lack of funding to undertake restoration of damaged natural and archaeological features. While we are pleased that the Batger Rd to Hillside Cres section of the round-the-mountain-track will soon be repaired, more needs to be done. This especially applies to the summit tracks. As parks become more crowded and funding limited, the Council and other co-governing agencies need to identify mechanisms that will provide for public access but also protect heritage parks. On this basis and from our experience we make the following detailed submissions:

- 1 We do not support the targeted rate for tourism unless part of the fund goes to dealing with the serious damage caused by park visitors. Approximately 50% of visitors to Maungawhau are estimated to be tourists. Valuable archaeological features are being damaged through lack of rangers and track-upgrading resources.
- 2 With greater use of popular parks, an identified budget with additional funding mechanisms is needed in the Annual Plan. On Maungawhau we still see commercial tourist operators making free use of the park on a regular basis but making no financial contribution to its upkeep. Some sort of levy and concessionaire licensing system is long overdue.
- 3 Council needs dedicated funding to lobby government for a uniform national bed tax and visitor entry tax to pay for international tourism pressures on parks like Maungawhau.
- 4 Targeted rates to preserve our conservation heritage, similar to the previous "Open Space and Volcanic Cones" targeted rate, should be reintroduced to cover the Auckland maunga and the "forgotten" regional parks.
- 5 The maunga should have an identified budget to better link with other Council policies relating to walkways, greenways, and viewshafts. This is urgent especially in times of rapid urban growth. The Independent Hearings Panel on the Unitary Plan stated:

Also in regard to local views and potentially new regional viewshafts, the Panel was impressed by the evidence of Mr Howden for the Friends of Maungawhau and his highlighting of the importance of the sequence of views from the Coast-to-Coast Auckland Walkway...He submitted that active tourism including walking is a rapidly growing economic opportunity and that views from regionally and nationally significant walkways could also be included in any future work programme by the Council to identify new regional and local public views.

<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/planspoliciesprojects/plansstrategies/unitaryplan/Documents/ihprecommendations/ihp020viewshafts.pdf>

- 6 The budget needs to list practical cost-saving and efficiency mechanisms. For example:
- 6.1 Funding to support an honorary ranger or kaitiaki programme. In the long term this would create savings and promote greater community involvement and support.
 - 6.2 A new performance target needs to be set supporting and promoting active long-term volunteer groups. Measuring by volunteer hours does not produce meaningful results. It would be better to measure the number of active groups making regular reports over any one year.
 - 6.3 Maungawhau would benefit from a koha / donation scheme in association with the new café and information centre. This would make visitors aware that ratepayers cannot fund all the increased park use and maintenance.

Thank you.

Friends of Maungawhau Committee

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