

FRIENDS OF MAUNGAWHAU

Caring for the volcanic heritage of Auckland

Submissions on the Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority Draft Operational Plan 2018/19

26 March 2018

Friends of Maungawhau Inc. (FoM) has a long association with the Tūpuna Maunga, primarily through our volunteer and advocacy work on Maungawhau. We have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and expertise and wish to contribute and assist the Tūpuna Maunga Authority in preserving and enhancing the volcanic and cultural heritage of Auckland. Our book *Maungawhau: A short history of volunteer action*, published in 2014, will soon be available as a free PDF download on our website.

Several of our members have commented on the draft Tūpuna Maunga Authority Operational Plan 2018-19. The individual submissions herein are prefaced by a summary of key points.

Four members will speak to their submissions today: Keith Ayton, Terry O'Meara, Sel Arbuckle and FoM chair Kit Howden. We thank you for the opportunity to have our views heard.

St Lukes Environmental Protection Society Inc. (STEPS) and Civic Trust Auckland strongly endorse these submissions.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Building strong relationships with volunteer groups

- Lack of communication with FoM by Council officers
- Loss of knowledge as Council staff move on and new people come in
- Lack of any setting, mechanism or opportunity for building inclusive and consultative relationships with volunteers
- Development of a "Volunteer Framework", mentioned in the Operational Plan 2017-18, appears to have been dropped.

Communication with the public

- The ongoing transition of the Tūpuna Maunga from recreation to heritage/cultural sites has not been communicated well to the public.
- There is a need for greater communication with the public on how ratepayer funds have been spent, particularly the targeted rate reserve.
- Maunga Authority members need to have a visible presence on the maunga themselves.

Role of FoM

- Our work goes beyond carrying out tasks related to biosecurity and biodiversity. We act as a conduit with the local community and other volunteer groups.
- FoM members possess a repository of knowledge that we wish to share. This needs to be recognised and utilised.

Restoration of tihi and tracks

- Lack of public consultation and information
- Need for high-quality tracks and regular track maintenance
- Schedules for track maintenance and desire line rehabilitation need to be developed and conveyed to volunteer groups.
- \$1.5 million is earmarked for the Maungawhau tihi, but there is no indication of how this money will be spent. The public have a right to know.
- FoM would like to know the outcome of the track review.

Vegetation

- Threats such as myrtle rust and possible park closures need to be addressed in the strategic and financial agendas.
- Weed control and revegetation need to be more closely integrated.
- The Operational Plan offers no specifics on any weeds. We can't comment usefully until there is a new Maungawhau management plan and detailed vegetation plan.

Ranger service

- We have campaigned for a ranger service for decades and are pleased that one is now being established.
- We found out about the recent appointment only by accident and have been given no information about the job descriptions.

Signage

- Way-finding and warnings are insufficient. Signage should convey a sense of welcome and respect, and give indirect guidance to visitors.

Management plans

- Individual maunga management plans are needed to give operational direction and detail. Their development should be a priority.
- Information about time frames and progress in developing the plans needs to be communicated to stakeholders.
- FoM seeks to take part in the development of a new management plan for Maungawhau.

Maungawhau information centre

- FoM would like to be kept informed of developments. We are often asked by visitors.

Concessions

- The development of a concessionaire framework, deferred until 2019-20 on a to-be-confirmed basis, needs to be given greater priority.

Recreation Strategy

- The Maunga Authority needs to work with Council and DOC to prioritise the development of an outdoor recreation plan that encompasses all public parks and the Tūpuna Maunga.
- Policies on passive recreation and cycling access, especially on the pedestrianised maunga, need to be developed.

Matukutūruru/Wiri Maunga

- We are pleased that funding has been allocated to Matukutūruru, but Jacaranda house is missing from the nil asset list.

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS FROM FoM MEMBERS

Keith Ayton

Thanks for the opportunity to speak today as part of Friends of Maungawhau. In preparation I have looked at my notes from the 2015/16 event, and then saw notes from 2010 with 29 points raised by FoM. I'm afraid that even after all this time we are going to raise some of the same ones again today.

Under *Values* in the plan we read: "Develop greater on the ground Tūpuna Maunga Authority presence from year 3 onwards." Is that three years from now (2020/21) or starting this year, since the authority started in 2014? I'm hoping that means a ranger service as we have advocated – forever.

That brings me onto "building strong relationships with volunteer groups" etc. At a recent meeting at a planting trial with officers it was casually mentioned that three "rangers", or field officers as we now know they are called, are being established with one already in place. With our keen interest in this, we would have hoped we might have been told about this happening.

We are probably your only friends; we know you haven't got any in Devonport. We are interested, and not only in Maungawhau, have a wealth of consistent knowledge and records over many years, some of it in our published book, and we attend most Hui, but we still feel sidelined. While each set of officers we have dealt with since the Authority was established have been very helpful, there seems to be something lacking at the handover stage and knowledge is lost which we need to fill in, again.

You have a fledgling group establishing on Big King whom we are helping and encouraging, after meeting at a Hui, and you have a one-man band at Wiri mountain whom we also encourage.

I feel you need to ramp up your presence at the entrances to each maunga with a welcoming sign/banner and contact details to encourage people who care. You have nice logos on all the paperwork here and smart shirts, but that needs to be out there on the maunga, but not just attached to some warning sign.

Now, just a couple of comments on the financial side.

There is no budget this year for *Distinct Entrances* on Maungawhau, but I hope the Interpretation & Storytelling budget of \$420,000 will include a welcoming message.

It's good to see neglected Matukutūruru/Wiri getting some attention. The asset list shows nil for buildings, but there is the damaged Jacaranda house?

Huge amounts are budgeted for tihi tracks on Maungawhau and Maungarei – there doesn't appear to be any public consultation or information on this.

Terry O'Meara

The tracks on Maungawhau need to be upgraded and then regularly maintained because of the vehicle ban on the maunga, which will increase the number of people needing pedestrian access.

The tracks need to be of high quality so that they are accessible in all seasons.

They need water bars incorporated in their design to prevent damage to archaeological and ecological features. The present tracks are heavily pitted, and rutted with wide heavily worn features down the centre of them creating drains, which lead to erosion and washouts. The lower 60-80 metres of tracks leading to Batger Rd and Rautangi Rd are in extremely poor condition. This leads to pedestrians creating 'desire lines' which causes damage to the vegetation adjacent to the tracks.

This may cause Health & Safety concerns for people who use them.

Along with the improvement of tracks there needs to be a plan to enhance the entrances to welcome visitors and impart a sense of arrival and expectation, and indirectly guide people to the pathways.

Suitable signage will help inform visitors and explain the importance of this very significant cultural and geological site.

Schedules for regular maintenance and mowing of existing tracks needs to be developed.

The appointment of a ranger on Maungawhau would greatly enhance overall operation and implementation of many of these issues.

Sel Arbuckle

The Friends of Maungawhau see ourselves as natural allies of the Maunga Authority. We wholeheartedly endorse the statement of values that underpin the Authority's activities. We are appreciative of the Authority's expressed wish to continue to build a strong working relationship with us. In this context, the appointment of a ranger is a practical step of crucial importance. It is just unfortunate that we only learned of the appointment by accident.

We do not accept that our activities can be pigeon-holed under the heading *Ecology and Biodiversity*. That is obviously the area in which we can be of most use to the Authority, but we also see ourselves as a valuable repository of local knowledge on other subjects, and as a conduit for communication with the local community of which we are a part. Unfortunately, the Operational Plan provides little detail on the basis of which the community might form an opinion. For example, very large sums of ratepayers' money are earmarked for track development. Apparently this follows a track review about which the community has no knowledge and into which it has had no input.

Strong working relationships with the local and conservation communities are not built with fine words. At least under Auckland City administration there was a formal consultative structure. That has gone. Relationships are built with a spirit of inclusiveness, a recognition that partnership is a two-way street, and above all a willingness to communicate.

Kit Howden, Chair of FoM

The Tūpuna Maunga Authority Operational Plan 2018/19 is closely linked with the Auckland Plan 2050 and Long-term Plan 2018-2028. But we find it hard to see any relationship from the overall strategic direction to actual on-the-ground operations. The maunga and volcanic cones are major heritage, recreation, economic and landscape icons of Auckland, and it is of concern they are not adequately integrated with an overall parks and open space system in Auckland. There is little in these plans that indicates an integrated approach. The reality of what is happening on the ground does not align with the strategic directions and priorities.

- 1 In the Auckland Council 10-year Budget (LTP) 2018-2028, *Supporting Information Section 1: Strategies* has no mention of the maunga or volcanic cones. Moreover, in the summary it states: "Greater provision of parks and open space will not be viable and community facility renewals will require a higher degree of prioritisation."
In other words, **with increasing population on a finite resource, greater pressure will be placed on our heritage and nature** which includes the maunga. There appears little discussion and plans to deal with and fund this trend.
- 2 To deal with the greater pressure, recreation planning in relationship with the other areas of open space in Auckland is needed as the city grows and people want access to green open space. We strongly recommend, as suggested by the NZ Recreation Association; the Federated Mountain Clubs and Walking Access Commission, that an **Outdoor Recreation Plan for all our public parks (including the maunga) be a major priority for Council, the Maunga Authority and DOC.**
These organisations have made this recommendation because of the coming park closures due to kauri dieback. This will put more pressure on the maunga. In addition, other impacts such as biosecurity closures and the challenge of myrtle rust need to be faced and this needs to be placed high on the Authority's strategic and financial agenda. Strategies and funding for this are not identified.
- 3 We support the transition of the maunga from an urban recreation park to a heritage protected area (as defined in IUCN definitions – if we follow UN first nation and conservation directions?) We are pleased that a priority in the Operational Plan is "Protection and restoration of the tihi (summits) through restriction of vehicle access to the tihi and significant track and viewing platform developments" (page 8). However, **greater emphasis needs to be on pedestrian access and communicating this better to the public. Maintaining this access is a priority.**

- 4 We are pleased that funding has been put aside for the tihi of Maungawhau, but \$1.5 million is excessive unless a long-term full restoration of the tihi is planned. If this is the case, it is secondary to dealing with the urgency of safety and erosion. The mass of people using the summit are eroding the crater rim. Ratepayer money has been wasted in the past in trying to prevent damage to archaeological features and mitigate erosion. We are concerned that the standards e] and f] under the current maintenance contract are not dealing with damage to archaeological features or controlling eroded tracks.
Simple floating boardwalks around the summit are urgently needed to protect important heritage and archaeological features and guide visitors.
- 5 Under *Policy and Management* in the *Work Programme Overview* (page 8), **individual management plans are needed for the maunga to give operational direction to vegetation management, tracks, entrances and boundary encroachment issues and – most important for us – volunteer engagement and direction.** We see this as a priority.
- 6 The most important policy and financial issue is **communication**. For example, as volunteers we do not know where we stand in the work we do in relationship to the contractors and plans. It also appears there are few guidelines and maintenance schedules for tracks and closure of damaging desire lines on the maunga.
- 7 We do not want elaborate signs, brochures and fancy entry points. At present there are no simple basic corflute signs explaining the Maunga Authority and giving a basic welcome at all entrances. These are urgently needed.
- 8 Much funding is spent on weed control, but unless there is a plan for revegetation, weeds soon re-invade. Weed control and revegetation need to be closely integrated. At present the control of targeted weeds in the Batger Quarry has resulted in the growth of harder-to-control weeds. I expect exotic plants will be necessary to stop erosion in these artificial quarry areas. Greater discussion is needed on these steep quarry areas and long-term detailed plans developed.
-

Geoffrey Hinds

I wish to speak to the part of the Tūpuna Maunga Authority Operational Plan that pertains to **Volunteers and Partners**, i.e. "Continue to build strong working relationships with the FoM and partners" (page 30).

I have been participating in the Tuesday morning volunteer group on the maunga and for me it is the highlight of the week as I do not have a garden of my own. However, recently I have heard concerns from more experienced members of the group about lack of communication from members of the Maunga Authority and the Council. I had first-hand experience of this when on the 13th March a group of us travelled to Ambury Park to meet up with personnel from the Maunga Authority and Council regarding the trial plantings. One of the officers expressed surprise that we were there at all – he was anticipating a threesome. Had I had the presence of mind, I would have pointed out that the FoM workers have had an active role in weeding and planting in that patch. Indeed, I have been personally involved in at least one such excursion.

Also at that meeting I heard mention of possible fire risk on the Maunga and asked one of the officers what provisions would be made for appointing a ranger for Maungawhau. The answer was that three had already been selected, with one due to start work. This was news to us as we have had no communication about this hitherto, and the FoM have long advocated a ranger on the Maunga.

The above examples illustrate how far the "strong working relationships" fall short of the stated aims.

April Glenday

Tihi tracks and track network

Priority has been given to tihi tracks. A massive \$1.5 million is allocated for the Maungawhau tihi track in the two years 2018-20. We would like to receive a copy of the track review that we have asked about on several occasions, and be kept informed and consulted about the plans.

Budgets for the wider track network are deferred until 2019-21 for Matukutūruru and Ōhinerau, and slowly increase for Maungarei, Maungawhau and Takarunga. For Maungawhau in particular, the bulk of the track expenditure (\$600,000 of \$670,000) is deferred until 2020-21, with no indication of what this is for. Far greater urgency and immediate attention needs to be given to fixing the eroded state of the tracks, washouts, gravel flowing into storage pits, and obliteration of features on Maungawhau.

Entrances, way-finding and interpretation

We would like to see as soon as possible welcoming entranceways that acknowledge Tūpuna Maunga ownership and impart to visitors a sense that they are entering a special place. There is an interpretation budget of \$820,000 over the next three years for all maunga, but the dearth of information available to visitors now is a shameful situation that needs to be addressed. Development of way-finding signage needs to go hand-in-hand with distinct entrances and cultural interpretation.

Maungawhau information centre

There is a significant budget of \$420,000 over the two years 2018-20 (up from \$45,000 in the 2017/18 Operational Plan) for an information centre on Maungawhau, but we have not been informed of the plans.

- Will the information centre occupy only the annex portion on the eastern side?
- What are the café lease plans?
- Will the Tūpuna Maunga Authority's smoke-free and alcohol-free policies be applied in the café?

We hope that a zero-waste policy will be established and that FoM will be invited to have an information display of our own.

Concessions

Page 71 of the Operational Plan says that the Commercial Strategy will be finalised in 2018-19.

A concessionaire framework is a key component of the Commercial Strategy, as outlined in the IMP, but levies won't be considered until 2019-20 at the earliest, and even that is "to be confirmed".

We commented last year on commercial tourism operators making free use of the bus parking area on Maungawhau but contributing nothing to preserving the maunga. For more than 20 years we have been advocating a concessionaire licensing system. Concessionaire licensing is best practice in park management. It is commonplace in New Zealand and the principle of contributing financially when taking profit from reserve land is well understood. Commercial filming on the maunga incurs a permit and fees, so there is already a precedent to charge for commercial activity on the maunga. A concessionaire system is also simple to implement, requiring registration only.

We presume the long delay is because tihi pedestrianisation has not been completed. But tour buses, and the hundreds of tourists they disgorge everyday, impact only on Maungawhau. Would you please reconsider the time frame for concessionaire licensing, bring it forward as a confirmed policy and implement it on Maungawhau in 2018/19?

Christine Major

Operational and management plans

We note that \$1.36 million of the targeted rate reserve has now been spent in the three years since 2015-16. Presumably at least half was spent on the 2016 Integrated Management Plan. The remaining \$1.139 million is allocated to developing strategies and the individual maunga management plans. Until the individual plans are completed, the annual Operational Plan can only align with the IMP and consequently is high-level and deficient in detail. The absence of workable plans is not motivating for existing volunteer groups such as ourselves or for recruiting new volunteers. We would like to know what time frames have been set for the individual plans.

As stakeholders familiar with previous conservation, management and vegetation plans, we seek to have input into development of the Maungawhau management plan.

Tūpuna Maunga Recreation Strategy

We are pleased that pedestrianisation of five more maunga will be completed this year. We urge the Maunga Authority to complete its Recreation Strategy as soon as possible, in line with Council's *Outdoor Recreation Investment Plan* which specifically includes reserves, ecologically significant areas, and maunga within its scoping brief. Policies on passive recreation and cycling need to be developed quickly. Granting cycling access to roads and tracks on pedestrianised maunga could lead to off-track riding and damage.

Comments by other FoM volunteers

- The Operational Plan doesn't mention how they are going to reduce the height of the kikuyu on any of the maunga. It's going to be a real problem once cattle are removed.
- Kikuyu covers cultural features, smothers native vegetation, and poses a fire risk in summer. Tall kikuyu is very dry underneath and fire would travel fast. Also, some children are allergic to kikuyu and cutting it shorter in October/November by a group such as community work offenders, for example, would be a good idea.
- Better signage would be great! Think of all those people who ask us at Batger Road if they can climb the maunga from there.
- A rubbish bin is needed at every maunga entry. Also a sign saying please put your rubbish in a bin.
- What are the rangers for? What do they do? Why weren't we told?
- I would like certain weed species (notably moth plant) to be treated in like manner as the law on wearing a bicycle helmet. If one fails to put on a bicycle helmet when requested by a police officer, a fine may be imposed. If one fails to remove a pest plant upon a request by a council officer, a fine may be imposed.