



OIA 19-E-0045 docCM 5695616

25 February 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

### **OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 24 January 2019. You requested the following:

“Any reports, feedback, surveys or analysis done by DOC, TNZ, or received by them from third parties, on potential hazards or safety issues relating to Cape Kidnappers.”

In a subsequent request dated 24 January 2019 you asked:

1. Who assessed the Cape walk and authorised it suitable to be promoted as a walk by DOC and Tourism NZ under the Great Day and Great Short Walks banner?
2. What surveying was involved before it was decided to proceed with this?
3. Why were local tour operators not contacted for their opinion on the suitability of the Cape as a walking destination?

### **Background**

The Cape Kidnappers Walking Track was developed as part of a network of five ‘Day Hikes’ selected from existing DOC tracks. The network was developed following extensive domestic and international research undertaken in 2017 with Tourism New Zealand, to identify the types of activities our visitors most want to do. The research found that there was high demand for short walks (30 minutes to 3 hours) and Day Hikes (3 to 8 hours), and that there are seven key factors people consider when deciding on the suitability of a walk. The factors include different levels of fitness of the walkers; the landscapes and scenery; time to complete the walk; time available on the day; the terrain of the walk; unique experiences to see and do and the facilities available on the walk.

#### **1. Who assessed the Cape walk and authorised it suitable to be promoted as a walk by DOC and Tourism NZ under the Great Day and Great Short Walks banner?**

Informed by the research, DOC proposed a list of potential walks and then checked with local rangers, iwi and communities to see which of these existing tracks were

ready to provide experiences appropriate for people's time, competencies and expectations.

Walks were selected by a project team involving a range of DOC staff including DOC's Recreation, Tourism and Historic Unit who led the product development work. Local operations staff assessed walks on whether they were able to accommodate increased visitors. They also considered potential biodiversity, biosecurity and cultural impacts from having more people walk the tracks. As part of this exercise some walks were withdrawn on staff recommendations.

In the case of the Cape Kidnappers Walk, staff from DOC's Napier office provided advice on stakeholder views and operational considerations. The walk covers several land tenures, with the beach section (where the rockfalls have occurred), from the Clifton start, following unformed public road administered by Hastings District Council, and sections of private land. DOC manages the land at the end of the walk at Cape Kidnappers.

## **2. What surveying was involved before it was decided to proceed with this?**

Please also see attached documents.

Throughout the process, concerns have been raised about visitor safety issues in relation to the rockfall hazard on the beach section of the track. This included a review of the visitor risk assessment of the hazards on the track to identify all risk present.

To help inform DOC on its risk management options Opus produced a Scoping Report for the Cape Kidnappers site (the 'site' in this context includes the Cape Kidnappers gannet colony, walking track, and amenity area). The purpose of the report was to assist DOC with the identification of potential development options for the Cape Kidnappers site and provide high level information to feed into the business case for development of the site. This report also contained a Preliminary Geotechnical Report which was a high-level assessment of the geological and geotechnical conditions. The recommendation required:

- DOC to ensure amenities were able to cope with increased visitor numbers.
- Regular ongoing maintenance of the access track to ensure a safety margin between the track and the edge of the cliff face.
- The removal of a large macrocarpa tree to improve visitor safety.

## **3. Why were local tour operators not contacted for their opinion on the suitability of the Cape as a walking destination?**

Napier Office staff confirmed that consultation took place with the concessionaire and stakeholders about their opinion on the suitability of the DOC section of the track/infrastructure and the effect of increased promotion. The timing around consultation is unclear at this stage and the process is being reviewed.

## Attachments

The following documents fall within the scope of your request for any reports, feedback, surveys or analysis done by DOC, TNZ, or received by them from third parties, on potential hazards or safety issues relating to Cape Kidnappers and are attached:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document description</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	6 Sept 2017	Risk Assessment for Cape Kidnappers track	Released in full
2	Unknown	Consultation signoff by Regional Operations Director	Released in full
3	11 Oct 2017	Memo to Operations Managers	Released in full.
4	13 Oct 2017	Short/Day Walks analysis	Released in full.
5	2018	Short/Day Walks Monitoring and Evaluation 2018	Released in full
6	2018	Context/process/results for day hikes	Released in full
7	10 Nov 2017	Cape Kidnappers redevelopment Options Analysis	Released in full

DOC does have concerns around the consultation process and risk assessment process. We take this matter and the safety of visitors extremely seriously. Immediately after the incident we initiated an internal investigation to examine our processes, identify underlying causes and inform future work. We won't be in a position to comment further until this investigation is complete.

In the meantime, we are working closely with Hastings District Council who are managing the response to the landslides at Cape Kidnappers. The beach and Cape Kidnappers reserves will remain closed while a geotechnical assessment of the landslide is being carried out.

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact me by email:

[Redacted]

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

Steve Taylor  
Director, Heritage and Visitors  
for Director-General

