



Briefing to the incoming Associate Minister of Conservation

June 2014



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1. Introduction

Welcome to your new role as Associate Minister of Conservation. I know that you already have a familiarity with the Department's work, both from your role as Chair of the Local Government and Environment Select Committee and, more recently, as Parliamentary Private Secretary leading the review of the structure and functions of Conservation Boards.

This briefing provides you with a succinct overview of the Department's work as it relates to the roles and responsibilities that Hon Dr Nick Smith, Minister of Conservation has delegated to you as Associate Minister of Conservation. They are, in summary, matters related to the Department's community partnerships, conservation boards and to conservation in the Christchurch rebuild.

The Department will be pleased to provide you with support and further information on these or any other matters relating to your responsibilities as Associate Minister of Conservation.

I look forward to supporting you in this role.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lou Sanson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lou Sanson

Director-General

2. General structure of the Department of Conservation

In 2013 the Department of Conservation adopted a new business model, focused on doing more with others to achieve significant growth in the amount of conservation being achieved throughout New Zealand. Our model is designed to allow the Department to deliver its own conservation work as effectively as possible; to increase the awareness of conservation challenges we face; and to work more effectively with others so that, in partnership, we can achieve even more conservation.

To give effect to this model, our organisational structure has been reshaped to create a department that is outward facing; integrated and internally efficient, and that is set up to deliver our vision: New Zealand is the greatest living space on earth. The structure is designed to drive interdependence across business groups and to promote behaviour that supports DOC working as one organisation. It comprises six groups, which can briefly be described as follows:

The **Conservation Partnerships Group** is responsible for growing conservation through partnerships. As this part of the Department's work largely mirrors your area of delegated responsibility, it is described in greater detail below.

The **Conservation Services Group** is responsible for doing conservation work in the field. It is organised into six regions, each led by a Conservation Director. Each region has teams of rangers who carry out recreation, historic heritage and biodiversity work across New Zealand. They work closely with the Partnerships Group to deliver field work in partnership with others as well as doing all of the Department's conservation work that occurs locally – from hut and track maintenance, to species and ecosystems work, and interacting with the public daily on a wide range of conservation topics and issues.

A Planning Unit is contained within the Services Group to ensure that we work more efficiently and effectively together to plan and prioritise work.

Kahui Kaupapa Atawhai is responsible for developing a cultural platform that connects people with the natural world and integrates Kaupapa Māori with conservation management: “Kia Kotahi Mai - People and nature as one”. It plays an important role in building cultural awareness, developing DOC's capability for working in a Māori dimension, and leading DOC's work to ensure that we fulfil our Section 4 responsibilities of the Conservation Act.

Kahui Kaupapa Atawhai also focuses on developing the foundation for iwi conservation leadership. Its work in leading the engagement with whānau, hapū and iwi supports our Partnerships and Services groups to work with iwi on the ground, and to grow conservation partnerships with iwi across the country.

The **Business Performance Group** has the role of creating an integrated working environment that results in greater conservation gains by providing effective and efficient business systems, tools and support.

It ensures that the Department's systems, processes and tools are functional, simple, efficient, economic and meet customer and statutory requirements. The group also fulfils the essential functions related to finance and investment, business assurance, information systems and services, business shared services, business improvement, management and planning.

The **Policy and Regulatory Services Group** is responsible for embedding conservation thinking and its links to New Zealand's prosperity across agencies and sector groups, and with our Treaty partners.

This group leads the Department's strategic policy development and its input to Treaty settlement negotiations, manages the Department's legal service and responses to ministerial and Official Information Act requests, and provides statutory land management, resource management planning, statutory management planning and permissions services to conservation decision-makers.

The **Science and Capability Group** designs and implements systems by which science, technical, capability and communications inform and enable DOC and the sector to deliver increased conservation outcomes for the benefit of New Zealand both now and in the future.

The group is focused on building the skills and leadership capability of people to engage productively in conservation, by communicating the value of conservation; improving conservation delivery through new and improved systems and processes grounded in science; and managing DOC's obligations under international conservation agreements and other international initiatives.

3. The Conservation Partnerships Group

The Conservation Partnerships Group is responsible for driving growth in conservation through partnerships. Our goal is to secure beneficial value exchanges with partners such as iwi, business, local authorities, private landowners and communities.

Our effort is focused on four main areas:

1. securing value exchanges with partners to benefit conservation;
2. project managing new, large-scale value exchanges to ensure that they are delivered successfully on the ground (locally, regionally and nationally);
3. maintaining and enhancing strong relationships with external partners; and
4. being an advocate for conservation locally, regionally and nationally

Our success will be measured by:

- increased partnership engagement and involvement in conservation;
- significant growth in the amount of conservation work done with the funding and support of external parties; and
- increased conservation outcomes across New Zealand.

The Partnerships Group comprises:

Commercial Partnerships Unit – Wāhanga Ūmanga Hou

The Commercial Partnerships Unit contains the Commercial Partnerships, Commercial Management Public Conservation Land, Commercial Channels and Marketing teams.

Community Engagement Unit – Wāhanga Whakapiri Hāpori

The Community Engagement Unit contains the National Outreach and Education, National Volunteering and National Community Partnerships Teams.

National Integration Unit – Wāhanga Ruruku

The National Integration Unit ensures coordination of partnerships work across the regions, national partnerships units and other business groups. It has staff in National Office and each regional office.

Partnership Regions – Manutātaki a Rohe.

There are six partnership regions across New Zealand. The aim of the Regional teams is to build and maintain strong local relationships. The regions include a tenure review team and visitor centres. Their areas are shown on the following map.

4. Community involvement in conservation

The Department is working with close to 600 community groups throughout New Zealand. The groups vary significantly in their membership, purpose (e.g. restoration, education, recreation), and work across both private and public land. In the past year, approximately 35,000 workday equivalents were contributed by people volunteering. The extent of the contribution to conservation from New Zealanders outside of these groups/volunteers is significant, but not currently quantified.

Volunteering

National Volunteer Week is an annual celebration of volunteering. The theme for this year's Volunteer Week (15–21 June 2014) is: 'With your contribution and my contribution the people will live'. Events will be held around the country to recognise the contributions made by conservation volunteers. The Department is currently collating stories about great volunteer projects/people to raise the profile of these contributions throughout the conservation sector. To acknowledge the contributions of younger volunteers to conservation, the Department is sponsoring three places for youth conservation volunteers on an Outward Bound 21-day course from 3–23 August.

National Survey of New Zealanders

The Department's annual National Survey of New Zealanders is currently underway (administered by Nielson). The survey seeks context on New Zealanders' views of the importance of conservation and their understanding of the importance of a range of conservation issues. Last year, 81% of people who responded to the survey said that conservation is 'very important' or 'important to them personally'. This percentage has been fairly consistent since the survey was established. While a high number of New Zealanders identify conservation as important to them, this does not flow through to participation or action in conservation. A total of 42% of those surveyed indicated that they did not participate in any conservation activities last year.

Conservation Leaders Symposium

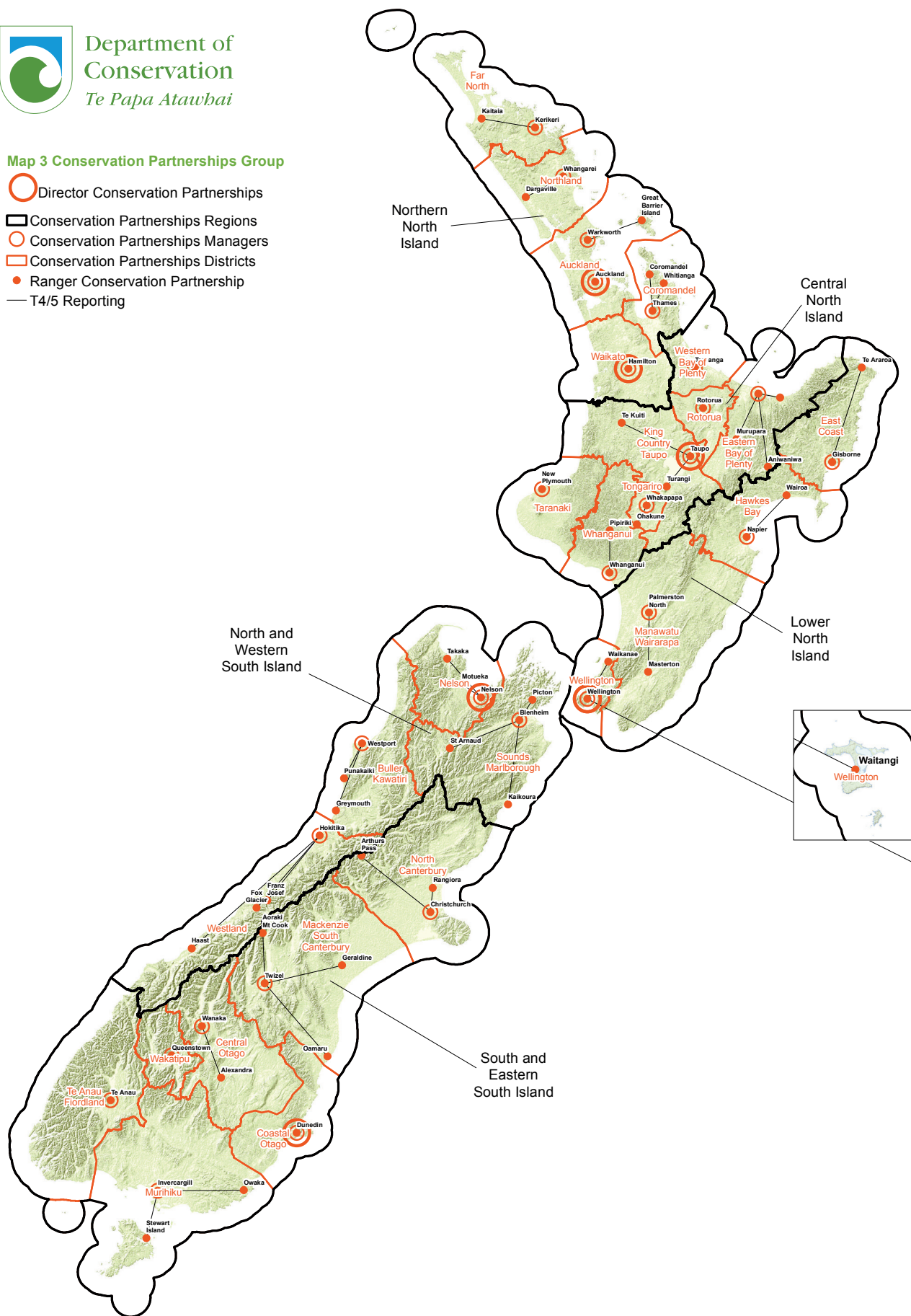
The Department is planning to facilitate a Conservation Leaders Symposium to explore the current landscape of conservation in New Zealand. The ultimate aims are to build a big picture view of this landscape and what it means for members of the conservation sector, both individually and as a group (for example the symposium to help shape DOC's partnerships approach), and to discuss ways of working collectively to improve conservation growth in New Zealand. Likely attendees include NGOs, trusts, government



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Map 3 Conservation Partnerships Group

- Director Conservation Partnerships
- Conservation Partnerships Regions
- Conservation Partnerships Managers
- Conservation Partnerships Districts
- Ranger Conservation Partnership
- T4/5 Reporting



departments, community groups and local councils who are interested in engaging more New Zealanders in conservation. Planning is underway for this symposium to be held later in 2014.

Community Conservation Partnerships Fund

The Community Conservation Partnerships Fund – Pūtea Tautiaki Hapori was established in February 2014 to provide funding to community-led conservation groups for natural heritage, recreation and historic projects in New Zealand on public and private land and waters.

The 2014 funding round is now closed. Applications were assessed by Department of Conservation staff and conservation board representatives and are currently being moderated. The Minister of Conservation will make a final decision on the funding recommendations and applicants will be notified of the outcome of their funding application in late June or early July.

NGO Forum

Over the past few years, DOC has hosted a regular forum of NGOs with an interest in conservation. The NGO Forum has historically been held every couple of months, with the primary aim of discussing issues of common interest. As part of the implementation of its new operating model, DOC is interested in focusing the Forum's discussions on how the Department and member NGOs could work better together to further common goals. The next meeting of the Forum will be held on 6 June 2014, and will mainly focus on discussing the best way forward for the Forum.

Conservation Week

Conservation Week is an annual campaign run by the Department of Conservation to raise awareness of the benefits of conservation and to encourage people to get involved. Each year, Conservation Week gives kiwis the opportunity to celebrate New Zealand's special places and native wildlife by participating in events and activities, learning about what we can do to protect and conserve the world around us, and sharing these experiences with whānau. Conservation Week 2014 will be held from 1 to 9 November. This year's theme is 'Discover the world where you live', and is about encouraging people to enjoy their local treasures such as campsites, scenic reserves, wetlands, forests, walking tracks and other areas that have conservation values.

Each district will choose local treasures to promote as part of the campaign, working with local partners to run events showcasing the sites. Attendees will be able to find out more about conservation and recreation opportunities in their areas.

Monitoring and reporting

As working with others is at the heart of DOC's strategy to grow conservation, it is critical that we can measure and report adequately on this area of activity. A project is underway to design, develop and implement a more integrated monitoring and reporting system to build on the conservation sector's engagement and business partnership activities. The system will allow us to measure the difference we make and to report progress towards our targets. It will also provide objective information to inform and improve future management and policy. The project is expected to be completed and ready for implementation by mid-September 2014.

Education strategy

A key area of focus for the future is developing an implementation plan for the DOC formal education strategy *‘Investing in Conservation Education for a Sustainable and Prosperous Future – Tai Ao – Tai Awatea’*. This will include development of a suite of programmes, tools and initiatives that support teachers and other education organisations to identify and deliver authentic purposes for learning within a conservation context.

The implementation plan will include a review of DOC’s current conservation education initiatives, development of measuring and monitoring tools, guidelines and tools to support DOC staff working in conservation education, and identification of opportunities to scale-up successful programmes with our partners. The Department has been meeting with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for the Environment regarding opportunities to co-operate in environmental education in the formal education sector. Early thinking is that the potential lies in developing teacher capability, developing resources and providing a connection to place.

5. Conservation boards

In November 2013, as Chair of the Conservation Boards Review Panel (‘The Panel’), you presented the Panel’s report on conservation boards to the Minister of Conservation. The report made 30 recommendations to improve the effectiveness of conservation boards.

Implementation of the Review findings

The Department views the Panel’s recommendations as an important opportunity to ‘reset’ its relationship with conservation boards and has developed a programme to implement the Panel’s recommendations. That work has been broken into three streams:

1. Create nationally consistent induction and training resources for board members (including defining statutory roles, general policy, fact sheets and forms).
2. Establish a small advisory panel (including two board chairs, a board servicing officer, a partnerships director and a project coordinator) to provide feedback and advice on the operational aspects of the recommendations, such as the new reporting framework, attendance at board meetings, and defining the training needs of board chairs.
3. Settle with boards the collaboration and relational aspects of the recommendations. This includes ‘resetting’ the relationship between the Department and boards, discussing the role of boards in response to recommendations directed at recreation and contestable funds, and the visibility of boards within their communities.

Objectives

There is little doubt that highly functioning and well-supported conservation boards can play a key role in conservation growth using their unique skills and connections to communities, iwi, local government and business.

The Department is looking forward to exploring with boards the Panel’s recommendations to form a common view on the manner in which the relationship can move forward in an open and collaborative way. The Department plans to bring board chairs together with regional partnerships directors in order to discuss the Panel’s recommendations. This will coincide with the Minister’s attendance at the New Zealand Conservation Authority

(NZCA) meeting on 11 June. It will be an indicator of the collaborative manner in which the Department wishes to work with conservation boards to achieve greater conservation outcomes.

The Department has also asked that the Panel's recommendations be discussed as an agenda item at that NZCA meeting.

Partnerships directors have a good understanding of the Panel's recommendations and are already engaging with their boards. They are also identifying new ways to support boards to be successful.

Structure and roles of conservation boards

The 14 conservation boards have been established to provide interaction between local communities and the Department of Conservation. The Department manages almost one-third of New Zealand's land area—including national parks, reserves, forest parks and other protected areas—for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

The boards are independent bodies, established by statute. Each represents the public interest in the work of the Department, and conservation in general, within the area of jurisdiction of that board. They are advisors to the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA). A brief description of the NZCA follows this section to provide you with a context for the work of the conservation boards.

The functions of boards are set out in Section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987 and in the National Parks and Reserves Acts. The boards focus on planning and strategic direction, rather than the day-to-day operational details of the Department's work.

Each board has a major responsibility for overseeing the Conservation Management Strategy for its region. A conservation management strategy is a 10-year plan for managing and protecting the natural and historic features and wildlife of the region. It is prepared by a board and the Department in consultation with interested parties. Once a conservation management strategy has been approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority, boards advise on its implementation.

A board's work can include:

- developing and reviewing national park and other management plans for lands administered by the Department;
- advising on proposals for marine reserves;
- considering the impact of concessions for tourism and other activities on conservation land;
- looking at the range of recreational opportunities in the region; and
- advising on proposals to change the protective status or classification of areas of national or international importance.

The majority of members are appointed as a result of a public nomination process. They are chosen to provide a diversity of experience, background and spread across the main geographical and ecological zones within a board's area. Members may have knowledge of nature conservation, natural earth and marine sciences, cultural heritage, recreation, tourism, the local community and Māori perspectives.

Members are appointed as individuals for their experience, expertise and links with the local community. They are not representatives of any particular cause or organisation. Their first duty is to work to achieve the statutory interests of the board.

The Minister of Conservation appoints members to conservation boards in accordance with section 6P of the Conservation Act 1987. Terms of appointment are generally for three years

but members may be nominated for a second term. Some members are appointed for a shorter term, especially where they are replacing a member who has resigned.

The Department will provide you with a series of fact sheets that provide greater detail on the work of conservation boards.

New Zealand Conservation Authority – Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O Aotearoa

While it is not your delegated responsibility, given the close relationship with conservation boards, the following provides a succinct overview of the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA).

The role of the New Zealand Conservation Authority is to provide advice to the Minister of Conservation and the Director-General of Conservation.

It is closely involved in conservation planning and policy development affecting the management of public conservation areas administered by the Department as it approves the statutory strategies and plans that set objectives for their management.

The NZCA is serviced by the Department of Conservation.

Its **mission** is to ensure for the people of New Zealand, that the richness of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage is valued, restored, maintained, and cared for by all, in order to enhance our environment and quality of life.

The **functions** of the NZCA are set out in legislation, including:

- Section 6B of the Conservation Act 1987
- National Parks Act 1980
- Wildlife Act 1953
- Marine Reserves Act 1971
- Reserves Act 1977
- Wild Animal Control Act 1977
- Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978
- Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998

The functions that it exercises most frequently are:

- consideration and approval of conservation management strategies and national park management plans;
- proposed changes of designation of lands affecting national parks, and
- provision of advice on conservation issues of national importance.

It is consulted by the Department of Conservation in the formulation of policies and plans and at the beginning of its annual business planning cycle.

6. Conservation in the Christchurch Ōtautahi Rebuild

The Christchurch Ōtautahi rebuild provides a range of prospects for the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai.

- It offers opportunities to partner with other agencies and businesses to increase the Department's profile in the city and engage with urban audiences. These initiatives support the 'green city' concept that came through so strongly during the 'Share an Idea' community engagement process led by the Christchurch City Council.
- It will also reinforce the Department's support for, and commitment to, Christchurch Ōtautahi as we rebuild our Christchurch Ōtautahi office in the central city as part of the Christchurch Integrated Government Accommodation project.

Partnerships for conservation outcomes: 'Bridge to Nature'

The 'Bridge to Nature' projects are part of the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai North Canterbury Partnerships team Urban Engagement Strategy. The strategy aspires to engage urban audiences by bringing nature and conservation into the city through working with relevant partners.

Engagement initiatives in the urban engagement strategy for Christchurch Ōtautahi include social media-based interactive nature experiences, an urban nature oasis, a transitional Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai Visitor Centre, NaturePlay (completed), The Waitākiri Sanctuary (potential use of red zone land as a nature sanctuary), and commercial partnerships (potentially Wiki House).

These experiences will serve as a 'bridge to nature', transporting residents and visitors from asphalt and building sites to the beauty and experiences of the natural world. It is envisaged that by providing such experiences and opportunities to engage with nature, residents and visitors feel more connected to, and so value, the natural world. This generates an increased desire to take an active role in the restoration and protection of the natural world, achieving conservation outcomes on the ground.

Within this paradigm, space has opened to test transitional, innovative concepts for urban engagement. The Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai North Canterbury Partnerships team is embracing these opportunities with a range of projects outlined below that form the Bridge to Nature.

Bridge to Nature projects

- **Ōtautahi Transitional Visitor Centre:** Through a strategic relationship with the Christchurch City Council, as part of the transitional development on High Street, we are contributing to the city's rebuild and revitalisation by moving the Christchurch Ōtautahi Gateway Visitor Centre into the central city.
- **Urban Oasis:** The background work around the Bridge to Nature project identified nature as a 'magnet' for urban engagement. The 'Urban Oasis' is a lush, public 'nature' space where people can gather, socialise, rest, restore.
- **NaturePlay Papatākaro Ao Tūroa:** Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai joined forces with Greening the Rubble to create an interactive, family-friendly garden on the corner of Hereford Street and Latimer Square.
- **Waitākiri Sanctuary:** The Sanctuary is an opportunity for Christchurch/Ōtautahi residents to reconnect with their natural and cultural heritage. The Department

of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai is one of a number of agencies promoting this proposal. The project's future is dependent on the decision by Minister Brownlee on the future use of the associated red zone land.

- **Mahinga Kai:** The Mahinga Kai project aims to be an exemplar demonstrating how mahinga kai could be developed and what outcomes would be expected.

Our approach

- **Interagency collaboration/partnerships:** Successful and meaningful engagement is best achieved when working with others. Growing relationships exist with the Christchurch City Council (CCC), Ngāi Tahu, Environment Canterbury Kaunihera Taio ki Waitaha, Canterbury District Health Board, educational institutes such as the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and the University of Canterbury, and with businesses that also have a responsibility for and interest in the protection and restoration of conservation values and 'natural capital'. Amongst these, partnerships have been formed with the CCC Transitional Team for moving our Christchurch Ōtautahi Gateway Visitor Centre into the central city, thereby contributing to the city's rebuild and revitalisation.
- **Demonstrating leadership:** Through trialling innovative ideas in a transitional space inspiring and influencing others through NaturePlay, i.e. having seen the success of NaturePlay, Environment Canterbury is now developing a similar site focusing on stormwater.
- **Capitalising on opportunities:** Investing in the rebuild and towards the growth and future of Christchurch post-quakes, e.g. a willingness and desire from businesses to partner with the Department on Bridge to Nature projects, Fulton Hogan contributing hard fill and labour to the NaturePlay site, and Waterforce developing the braided river feature pro-bono also for the NaturePlay site.
- **Capacity building:** Engaging directly with the public in a positive and proactive way to foster informed, knowledgeable future citizens; providing opportunities and experiences to connect, engage and learn, encouraging a sense of connectedness that is transferred to action towards restoration and protection. One example is that of community ownership and the value of NaturePlay, where at least six families, a residents' association and a local school have taken the initiative to manage the site. In an area that has traditionally experienced high graffiti and antisocial behaviour, there has been noticeably few accounts of graffiti at the NaturePlay site.

DOC Christchurch Ōtautahi Rebuild and visitor assets

To ensure that the Department is functioning in and supporting the growth of the central city, we are working with other government agencies as part of the Christchurch Integrated Government Accommodation project. Staff currently based at the temporary Moorhouse site will be relocated to an inter-agency central city site once a new building is complete, estimated 2015/2016. This is part of the Christchurch Integrated Government Accommodation project, where the Department will share accommodation to generate efficiencies and create further intergovernmental partnerships opportunities.

We continue to manage the assessment and repair of departmental historic and visitor assets damaged in the earthquakes. Due to the degree of damage and complexities in repairing historic assets, the ongoing repair programme is expected to extend at least over the next five years.