[redacted]

21 October 2025

Whakatipu-wai-
Māori/Queenstown Office
Cavells Building
1 Arthurs Point Road
Queenstown 9371
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-5557

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 13 August 2025, then refined on 2 September 2025, in which you asked:

> *In general we are seeking information about the Department of Conservation's decisions and policies regarding:*
>
> - *The relocation of Charlie Girl Kākā and other changes to the species held at the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary;*
> - *Investment, infrastructure, staffing, and funding decisions relating to the Sanctuary since 2019;*
> - *Strategic direction, operational planning, and financial considerations for the Sanctuary; and*
> - *Relevant correspondence, reviews, and partnership arrangements.*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

On 30 September 2025 we extended the timeframe to respond to your request to 21 October 2025 due to the large quantity of information to search through.

Your questions and our responses are listed below. On 5 October 2025 you further refined some of your questions and these refinements are indicated via a strike-through, or otherwise below.

1. ***Statement of Reasons (s.23 OIA)***

Please provide a formal statement of reasons for:

a.) The decision to relocate Charlie Girl Kākā;
b.) The decision to retain certain birds (e.g. takahē) at Te Anau;
c.) The overall strategic direction regarding changes to the species held at the Sanctuary.

Section 23 of the OIA relates to the right of access by a person to reasons for decisions affecting that person, therefore it does not apply here. I will, however, elaborate on some of the context given in Aaron Fleming's letter of 22 August 2025.

a.) The decision to relocate Charlie Girl Kākā

South Island kākā are classed as Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable. A breed-for-release programme is led by DOC, working with a range of captive facilities to enable this species to be re-established in areas where it has been lost. These facilities included DOC's Te Anau Bird Sanctuary and DCC's Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary, among others. As part of the breed-for-release programme, DOC has concentrated captive breeding pairs to one site (Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary) to help boost the number of chicks available for release. Having them at one site helps to manage things like forming new pairs and fostering eggs/chicks if required. In the 23/24 year, we had a particularly bumper breeding season with kākā pairs that had never bred before producing eggs with much needed genetic diversity to the population. However, a lot of these birds are inexperienced parents, so the support of an experienced female bird like Charlie would have been invaluable to foster eggs or chicks. As such, Charlie was moved from DOC's Te Anau Bird Sanctuary to the Dunedin Botanic Garden Aviary in June 2024 for this purpose. This was a standard part of species management for DOC. The decision to move Charlie was made prior to DOC's decision to transition out of managing the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary.

b.) The decision to retain certain birds (e.g. takahē) at Te Anau;

Takahē are the most iconic and important draw card for the public visiting Te Anau Bird Sanctuary. This, along with them being housed in an enclosure with availability of natural foraging, supports less intensive management.

c.) The overall strategic direction regarding changes to the species held at the Sanctuary

The Department will continue to support and operate the bird sanctuary as a community and visitor attraction at a safe and sustainable level with reduced resourcing, and with less work and site demands during the transition period.

2. ***Investment and Infrastructure***
   *Documentation relating to decisions about investment and/or funding in the infrastructure and staffing of the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary ~~since 2019~~ for the **last 2 years**.*

I have decided to release this information to you upon payment of a charge. Please see further information regarding charging towards the end of this letter.

3. ***Kākā Aviary Assessment***
   Documentation relating to the determination that the Kākā aviary was "unsuitable," including any assessment of whether it had adverse effects on Charlie or other birds.

There are no formal documents relating to the determination that the kākā aviary was unsuitable. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as the document does not exist.

However, DOC has responded to questions about the kākā aviary. Please see:

www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/oia/2025/charlie-the-kaka/oiad-4756-response-and-attachment.pdf

4. ***Site Suitability and Relocation Options***
   ~~Correspondence or~~ documents discussing the suitability of other sites for housing birds, including any assessment of the pros and cons of relocating any species.

No such documents exist, and I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA. However, I will provide a summary of the considerations and recommendations made during the decision-making process.

Consultation/discussions occurred with the captive coordinators or champion responsible for each species to gather their perspectives on possible rehousing options for each species.

Peacock Springs was considered and recommended by the co-ordinators for both kōwhiowhio and pāteke as the primary rehousing site, given their long-standing association with these species and confidence in their facilities.

The kākāriki coordinator considered three sites for relocating the Antipodes Island Kākāriki; Queens Park in Invercargill, Queenstown Kiwi and Birdlife Park, and the Otorohanga Kiwi House. Otorohanga was dismissed due to its distance from Te Anau. Queens Park in Invercargill and Queenstown Kiwi and Birdlife Park were recommended by the kākāriki coordinator; both have suitable amenities and have maintained Antipodes Island Kākāriki for several years.

5. ***Partnership Agreements***
   Copies of any Memoranda of Understanding (or similar arrangements) between DOC and other partners, including Ngāi Tahu, the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, Fish and Game, and MPI.

There is one document that falls within scope of this part of your request. Please see the document table later in this letter and **Item 1**.

6. ***Visitor Data***
   Visitor numbers ~~since 2014~~ and an explanation of how this data is collected.

   Refined/clarified to:
   Agree, limit to last 5 years and what when and how was that data collected: ie. What figures were relied upon

Please see question 10 and the associated document which outlines on pages 5 and 6 that there were approximately 50,000 visitors in 2024.

I have decided to release the remaining information to you upon payment of a charge. Please see

further information regarding charging towards the end of this letter.

7. ***DOC Recovery Programme***
   All correspondence related to the DOC Recovery Programme, including documents relating to the January 2017 statement that "the Takahē Recovery Programme would not support the reduction of the Sanctuary to a single species operation and/or passing of the management of the site to the Takahē Recovery Programme," together with documentation clarifying the reasons for that view and for any subsequent change of view.

To provide all correspondence relating to DOC Recovery Programmes, or specifically the Takahē Recovery Programme, would involve substantial collation and therefore I must refuse this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA. I have borne in mind section 18B of the Official Information Act but concluded that use of this provision would not assist in this case.

I will however clarify the statement made in the 2017 paper, as it appears it has been misinterpreted.

This statement was in response to an inquiry about whether the Takahē team would be better suited to managing Punanga Manu o Te Anau/Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, given that takahē are a primary attraction. The position of the Takahē team in 2017, which remains unchanged, is that they do not possess the necessary resources to manage the site. In addition, taking on this responsibility would divert attention from their primary goal of overseeing the national recovery of the takahē population.

To clarify the statement made in the 2017 document, the Takahē Team does not support passing of the management of the site to the Takahē Recovery Programme, regardless of how many species are present.

The Takahē Team does not have an opinion on whether takahē should be the only species or part of a multi-species setting, as this does not significantly influence the site's contribution to the recovery of the takahē population.

8. ***Financial Reporting***
   (a) Financial reports showing DOC's costs for operating the Sanctuary;
   (b) Information regarding paid staff numbers ~~from 1 January 2017 to the present;~~ last 4 years
   (c) Information on volunteer numbers, hours contributed, and related statistics.

I have decided to release this information to you upon payment of a charge. Please see further information regarding charging towards the end of this letter.

Please also see question 10 and associated document, which outlines on page 6 how ascertaining the exact expenditure/revenue costs for Te Punanga Manu is not easy.

9. ***Financial Considerations for Sanctuary Operations***

(a) Budgets, costings, or funding models for the operation or planned reconfiguration of the Sanctuary;

This work is being led by Great South and Ōraka-Aparima Rūnaka. DOC does not hold this information and as far as we are aware, it does not yet exist. I must refuse this part of your request under section 18(g) of the OIA.

(b) Cost estimates for upgrading the existing Kākā aviary;

DOC does not hold a current estimate, and I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(g) of the OIA.

(c) Total annual costs of maintaining the Sanctuary prior to the removal of birds.

I have decided to release this information to you upon payment of a charge. Please see further information regarding charging towards the end of this letter.

10. ***Comparative Reviews***
Documents comparing or referencing DOC's 2017 and 2024 internal reviews of the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, including draft and final recommendations.

On 22 September 2025 we asked if you would be willing to refine this question to a paper dated January 2025 called "Te Punanga Manu o Te Anau/Te Anau Bird Sanctuary review recommendations – Stage two, part 1." We explained that this paper provides a good overview and is likely to be the most useful document to provide to you. You agreed to this refinement on 5 October 2025.

Please see the document table below and **Item 2**.

11. ***Transition/Operational Planning***
A copy of DOC's transition or operational plan relating to the Sanctuary.

Please see the document table below and **Item 3**.

Documents being released to you

Item	Question #	Date	Document description	Decision
1	5	16 November 2005	Te Anau Wildlife Park Agreement in Principle F&G	Released in part – 9(2)(a)

2	10	17 January 2025	Te Punanga Manu o Te Anau/Te Anau Bird Sanctuary review recommendations – Stage two, part 1	Released in part – 9(2)(a), 9(2)(g)(ii), 9(2)(h)
3	11	30 May 2025	Punanga Manu o Te Anau/Te Anau Bird Sanctuary operational plan for 2025-2025 financial year	Released in part – 9(2)(a), 9(2)(g)(ii)

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- personal information, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- preventing undue pressure on officials, under section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, officials, or employees from improper pressure or harassment.
- advice subject to legal privilege, under section 9(2)(h) - to maintain legal professional privilege,

In making my decision, I have considered section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

Charging information

As suggested in our email to you of 23 September 2025, I have decided to charge to make some of the requested information available to you. Thank you for further refining those questions and thus reducing the charge. Please refer to the below estimate of costs. The labour costs outlined are based on standard Ministry of Justice guidelines and are *inclusive* of GST:

- Labour: $38 per half hour, with the first hour free
- Photocopying (if applicable), 20c per page, with the first 20 pages free.

I have not included photocopying in the proposed charge as I am assuming you are willing to receive the information electronically.

As is always the case, we have calculated a *maximum* charge based on the maximum hours required by staff to complete the work. Any unused component of the maximum charge will be refunded to you. The maximum charge to make the information available for questions 2, 6, 8 and 9.c is NZ **$4,940** inc. GST. This is based on the work taking a maximum of 66 hours.

If you wish to proceed with these parts of your request, please contact OIATeam@doc.govt.nz. Someone will be able to assist you should you wish to change or refine your request to reduce the charge. We would also like to further clarify with you the exact information that you are seeking, and what we are able to provide in response, so that you have full clarity on any information that you chose to pay for.

After that has happened, and assuming you agree to the charge, we will issue you with an invoice for the full amount. We anticipate we will have the information ready for you within 20 working days of your cleared payment of our invoice.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of any of my decisions expressed in this letter by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

David Butt
Acting Director Regional Operations Southern South Island
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai