

2 October 2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 04 September 2025, in which you asked several questions regarding FTE part time/full time staff numbers and associated positions.

On 10 September 2025 you provided the following clarifications:

- 1. I am asking for categorization by working hours not by employment type. I am seeking the employee headcount which is broken down by **full-time equivalent (FTE)** staff (40 hours per week = 1.0 FTE) and **part-time staff** (less than 40 hours per week).*
- 2. Apologies. Question 4 was a typo on my end. Please update Question [4] to read: How many total FTE and part time biodiversity field staff does DOC employ **today**. Please include the job titles of all roles you consider biodiversity field staff today.*

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

Context

HR System Transition and Data Availability

Your request refers to staff that DOC employs 'today'. Ordinarily, in order to respond to a request that was asking for current data, we would have provided information that was drawn from the last day of the month closest to the date of a request.

However, in late August 2025, DOC transitioned from its previous HR system to a new platform. The final day of live data entry into the original system was 25 August, with a system snapshot taken on 26 August to support continuity.

Since the transition, DOC has been undertaking essential activities including data migration validation, transaction catch-up, and integrity checks to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information in the new system.

While mapping between the two systems has been completed, the differences in structure and functionality mean that direct comparisons are not always like-for-like. To ensure consistency in reporting as we respond to your request, we are using data as at 26 August 2025 from the legacy system, which allows for a consistent basis for comparison with the data you have requested from November 2023.

Accordingly, for the data in our response, 'today's' vacancy data reflects the closest available snapshot prior to the system transition but may exclude some vacancies that were raised during the month of August 2025.

Please note that we have provided counts in line Te Kawa Mataaho's Public Service Commission's Workforce data definitions and so this includes permanent and fixed term staff only, and staff on parental leave or leave without pay are excluded. The headcount measure provided is where every employee is counted as one, regardless of their full-time equivalent (FTE).

Your Request

Your questions and our responses are listed below. For all questions, both the headcount for Filled and Vacant roles has been provided.

1. How many total FTE and part time staff did DOC employ in Nov 2023.

The following table shows the headcount for permanent and fixed term staff as at 30 November 2023.

	Headcount of Filled Positions as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)	Headcount of Vacant Positions as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)	Total Headcount as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)
Full Time (1.0 FTE)	2,556	371	2,927
Part Time (<1.0 FTE)	350	25	375
Total:	2,906	396	3,302

DOC has a seasonal workforce

DOC employs a significant number of seasonal workers each year, primarily between October and April, to support increased operational demands during the spring and summer months. This includes a vast mix of roles, including biodiversity monitoring, visitor services, and conservation fieldwork. As a result, DOC's headcount usually increases by around 200–300 staff during this period. In providing staff numbers in this response, please note that the November 2023 figures will include seasonal staff, whereas the August 2025 numbers will not. This means that the two datasets are not directly comparable.

2. How many total FTE and part time staff does DOC employ today.

The following table shows the headcount for permanent and fixed term staff as at 26 August 2025.

	Headcount of Filled Positions as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)	Headcount of Vacant Positions as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)	Total Headcount as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)
Full Time (1.0 FTE)	2,379	182	2,561
Part Time (<1.0 FTE)	317	22	339
Total:	2,696	204	2,900

3. ***How many total FTE and part time biodiversity field staff did DOC employ in Nov 2023.***
4. ***How many total FTE and part time biodiversity field staff [does] DOC employ [today].***
5. ***Please provide the current numbers of biodiversity field staff for each region per hectare of land DOC manages in that region.***

Aspects 3, 4 and 5 of your request are refused in full subject to section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist. For context '*Biodiversity field staff*' is not a defined or structured field within DOC's HR system, which means we are unable to extract this information. We do not measure staffing levels 'per hectare' as that is not a meaningful way to deliver outcomes for conservation.

Additionally, servicing these aspects of your request requires the creation of new datasets which is not a requirement under the OIA.

6. ***How many total FTE and part time staff did DOC employ on the Chatham Islands in Nov 2023, and how many do they employ today. Please note I am asking specifically about staff that work from the Chatham Islands office.***

Staffing Numbers on the Chatham Islands

In mid-2024, DOC strategically refocused its operating model for the Chatham Islands, merging with the Wairarapa District Team to enhance place-based effectiveness and achieve stronger conservation outcomes. This new model recognises that staff in the Chatham Islands / Wairarapa District are best placed to contribute to the DOC Chatham Islands work programme, without needing to remain on the islands full time.

While staffing FTE numbers on the islands were reduced as part of this shift, the creation of this new, larger district allows DOC to better manage delivery of conservation outcomes on the islands through a larger overall team and pool of specialised resources. Over the busy summer months from October to April, the on-island team is bolstered by an additional seasonal team comprised of secondments and volunteers as required.

These changes have allowed DOC to increase our resilience in delivering priority conservation outcomes on the islands, improve connectivity and integration between the island community and the Lower North Island operations team, ensure best practice delivery of work programmes that are strongly aligned with Department national and regional strategies, policies, and priorities. This new operating model was not designed with funding or cost savings in mind.

By concentrating on priority work and assembling skilled teams, DOC has reduced the overall cost of operations on the Chatham Islands. This approach allows DOC to deliver more work within the existing funding.

The table below shows the number of permanent and fixed term staff whose place of work is listed in our systems as the Chatham Islands as at 30 November 2023:

	Headcount of Filled Positions as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)	Headcount of Vacant Positions as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)	Total Headcount as at 30 November 2023 (Includes seasonal workforce)
Full Time (1.0 FTE)	13	0	13
Part Time (<1.0 FTE)	5	0	5
Total:	18	0	18

The table below shows the number of permanent and fixed term staff whose place of work is listed in our systems as the Chatham Islands as at 26 August 2025:

	Headcount of Filled Positions as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)	Headcount of Vacant Positions as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)	Total Headcount as at 26 August 2025 (Excludes seasonal workforce)
Full Time (1.0 FTE)	1	2	3
Part Time (<1.0 FTE)	3	0	3
Total:	4	2	6

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

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

[Redacted signature area]

Nāku noa, nā



Karyn Thompson
Chief People Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai