



29 September 2025

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai /
Conservation House
18 Manners Street
PO Box 10420
Wellington 614
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-5616

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 01 September 2025, in which you asked for [paraphrased]:

- *An update for 2024/25 to the figures in OIAD-4591 on Great Walk annual revenues and annual costs.*
- *Similar data to the above but showing the revenue and total cost of operating the hut network as a whole.*

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

Context

Between 8 & 10 September 2025, you and Steven Kerr, Principal Commercial and Revenue Advisor, exchanged emails to clarify and refine your request. As part of this clarification, you sent us a copy of the 2021 Wilderness magazine story referred to in your request. This story *explored how much revenue differential charges for visitors at certain huts might contribute to the costs of running the hut network as a whole*. We noted that this article is over four years old and limitations in our financial system are such that we would need to estimate some of this information. This information is likely to come heavily caveated due to the nature of the calculations required. On 10 September 2025 you emailed your acceptance to this approach.

In addition to the information provided in this response, our [Annual Reports](#) set out some information on costs and revenues that may be useful for you.

Great Walk financial information update

Cost information

In accordance with section 18(g) of OIA – information not held – I am unable to provide an update on the Great Walks cost data due to the limitations in our financial system.

You have previous years cost figures from OIAD-4591 and can adjust them for inflation. However, I note that for 2022/23 and 2023/24 the cost figures were adjusted for inflation from the 2021/22 figures, as the costs for Great Walks were not separately recorded in our financial

system at that time. Accordingly, we have not estimated the 2024/25 cost recovery position for Great Walks, as further adjusting 2022 costs may no longer be reliable at the individual Great Walk level.

Revenue information

I have decided to release updated information regarding the revenue per Great Walk (refer below).

Revenue	2024/25 (\$000)
Whanganui Journey	339
Tongariro Northern Circuit	538
Abel Tasman Coast Track	1,879
Heaphy Track	825
Paparoa Track	613
Routeburn Track	1,611
Milford Track	1,994
Kepler Track	2,173
Rakiura Track	401
Total Revenue	10,373

Notes on the revenue:

The revenue figures do not include Hump Ridge or Lake Waikaremoana, as they are operated by third parties; and not all costs and revenues come into our financial system (as some costs are born by, and some revenue goes to, those organisations).

Visitor Network as a whole

In 2023/24, we reviewed fees for Great Walks and 15 popular facilities. These reviews increased prices between 5% to 50% depending upon the facility, resulting in a 12% increase in user revenue for 2024/25.

DOC receives its funding via Parliament's appropriation funding, which may vary from year to year. The *Recreation Opportunities Appropriation* for 2024/25 was \$254 M, and:

- funds expenditure for recreation and covers costs categorised as 'Direct' – Regional Operational Expenditure (personnel and materials), Asset Depreciation, Crown Capital Charge and support costs such as Indirect costs and the Department Overhead
- is effectively made up from revenue earned from the visitor network - facility user fees and merchandise sales (\$28.5 M for 2025 financial year), along with Crown Revenue, donations, and taxpayer funds.

To be helpful to you, I decided to provide the information you requested as best as we can determine. The information is presented differently to the Wilderness story you provided due to the limitations in our financial system. The information in the table below is net of the Great Walks for the reasons stated earlier. It has been grouped in reasonably logical and relatable categories for understanding the Visitor Network facilities and assets. Refer to the table below.

Cost recovery estimates (indicative only)	2024/25
Total Visitor Network	11%
Overnight/multi-day tramping (non-Great Walk)	4%
Camping	50%
Cottages, cabins & Lodges	31%

Notes and caveats:

1. The cost recovery estimates above are based on facility user fees and merchandise sales only and estimated costs.
2. The cost estimates used for the figures above are theoretical estimates, not actual expenditure and should be considered indicative only – refer to the methodology description below.
3. The “Overnight/multi-day tramping (non-Great Walk)” category is used to reflect that visitors undertaking an overnight tramp stay in the facilities (huts and campsites) which also requires the use of tracks, structures, toilets etc. The revenue comes from all huts and backcountry campsites. All costs associated with these assets are included in the calculation, otherwise covering only huts would provide a misleading figure. The estimates are net of the estimated costs for short walks and day hikes.
4. The “Camping” category is the road accessible campsites (with “Backcountry campsites” associated with tramping excluded).
5. The “Cottages, cabins & Lodges” category are the facilities that can be fully booked by booking (not per bunk); they are generally (but not all of them) road accessible.
6. “Total Visitor Network” is simply all facility user fees and merchandise sales divided by the Appropriation.
7. The cost recovery for short walks and day hikes is not included as they are free to use.
8. The cost recovery figures are for 2025 financial year and previous years, if calculated, are likely to show different results due to changing levels of use, expenditure, and fees over time.

Cost estimation methodology

Our financial system does not record actual costs consistently across assets and facilities. Therefore, to show a cost recovery position, estimates are required to disaggregate the costs into relatable categories that you might find useful. The estimates are based on theoretical apportioning of the Appropriation using cost models. The models are founded on estimates of time and expenses to maintain facility/asset types with contingencies to cover assets not modelled and non-maintenance related activity associated with providing the Visitor Network. The revenues are recorded in the financial system against huts, campsites, cottages, cabins and lodges and retail and did not need to be disaggregated through estimation. The cost recovery estimates should be considered indicative only.

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.



Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Catherine'.

Catherine Wilson
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai