



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Modernising Conservation Land Management: Policy Approvals

Portfolio Conservation

On 30 June 2025, following reference from the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that in October 2024, ECO approved public consultation on changes to modernise conservation land management and invited the Minister of Conservation to report back with recommended legislative amendments [ECO-24-MIN-0235];

Policy approvals

- 2 **agreed** to the proposals to modernise conservation land management as detailed in the paper and Appendix 1 under ECO-25-SUB-0096, which will:
 - 2.1 streamline the conservation management planning system by replacing the Conservation General Policy and General Policy for National Parks with a National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS);
 - 2.2 replace conservation management strategies, national park management plans and conservation management plans with a single layer of areas plans;
 - 2.3 enable the creation of amenities areas to provide for recreational and public amenities and related services on conservation land;
 - 2.4 enable faster processing of concessions, including by specifying classes of activities;
 - 2.5 streamline contractual management of concessions;
 - 2.6 enable competitive allocation of concessions; and
 - 2.7 enable greater exchange and disposal of conservation land;
- 3 **directed** the Minister of Conservation to amend the purpose statement for the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) to ensure the NCPS and area plans referred to above can enable greater economic development on conservation land;

- 4 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to report back to ECO on:
- 4.1 policies for the new NCPS which will unlock economic activity within appropriate constraints;
 - 4.2 an appropriate mechanism for a financial contribution to Treaty partners for efficient engagement on statutory processes;
 - 4.3 s9(2)(f)(iv) and
 - 4.4 whether there are any situations in which leases and licences with significant private capital investment should be contestable;

Codifying section 4

- 5 **agreed** to add an overall descriptive clause to the Act following section 4 with signals and signposts to new requirements in various other parts of the Act;
- 6 **noted** that drafting will make clear that complying with the new requirements will be sufficient to comply with section 4 (in relation to the relevant processes), subject to advice from the Parliamentary Counsel Office;
- 7 **agreed** that the Act specify what section 4 does not require, such as making concessions contestable;
- 8 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation will liaise with the Ministerial Oversight Group for the Treaty principles provisions review on any drafting issues that arise regarding section 4 and Treaty principles;

Treaty settlements and Takutai Moana rights

- 9 **noted** the intent to uphold Treaty settlements through these reforms including redress commitments made by the Crown in Crown offers, Agreements in Principle, initialled and signed Deeds of Settlement, and settlement legislation;
- 10 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to report back to ECO on the following, after engagement with affected groups:
- 10.1 upholding relevant Treaty settlement commitments; and
 - 10.2 arrangements to uphold rights under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 (in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations);

Drafting of legislation

- 11 **noted** that a Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) to give effect to the above decisions holds a category 5 priority on the 2025 Legislation Programme (to be referred to select committee by the end of 2025) and will bind the Crown;
- 12 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions;
- 13 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation to make decisions consistent with the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0096 on issues that arise during drafting, except those in paragraphs 4 and 10;

- 14 **agreed** to also include in the Bill proposals agreed by Cabinet in 2022 [ENV-22-MIN-0059] but not enacted, as listed in Appendix 2 to the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0096;

National Conservation Policy Statement

- 15 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation intends to seek policy approvals for the NCPS in September 2025 following targeted consultation;
- 16 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation, Attorney-General, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, and the Minister for Resources to agree policy matters to be consulted on for the first NCPS;

Other policy proposals

- 17 **noted** that legislative amendments for the following could also be progressed through the Bill:
- 17.1 enabling charging for access to some conservation land [ECO-24-MIN-0236], on which the Minister of Conservation will report back to Cabinet shortly; and
- 17.2 supporting afforestation of Crown land [ECO-24-MIN-0246].

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Secretary's Note: This minute replaces ECO-25-MIN-0096. Cabinet agreed to amend paragraph 3.
