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████████████████████
13 February 2026

Hamilton | Kirikiriroa Office
Private Bag 3072
Hamilton 3240
doc.govt.nz
Ref: OIAD-6004

Tēnā koe ██████████

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 10 January 2026, in which you asked for:

1. *“Can you please provide the reasons why the Matamataharakeke track, Waikawau Bay, Coromandel has been closed since April 2024, including any policy, health and safety and other reason, for the closure. Please provide any documentation setting out the reason and decisions justifying the closure.”*
2. *It is noted that there is a private hut off the track, the Harakeke Hut, which appears to be on the DoC Estate and only accessible from the track. Please provide documentation as to the establishment of this Hut, what concessions were given by DoC to access the track and on what basis. Please also address of there is a lease or whether there was a sale of portion of land to establish the hut.”*

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

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Can you please provide the reasons why the Matamataharakeke track, Waikawau Bay, Coromandel has been closed since April 2024, including any policy, health and safety and other reason, for the closure. Please provide any documentation setting out the reason and decisions justifying the closure.”*

Background

The Matamataharakeke Track sustained significant damage during severe weather events in early 2023. Subsequent site inspections identified several compounding issues affecting the feasibility, safety, cultural acceptability, and affordability of reinstating public access at that time.

This closure was undertaken as a national directive in response to Cyclone Gabrielle under Section 13 of the Conservation Act 1987. The closure remains in place to ensure public safety and to manage environmental, cultural and operational risks appropriately.

The Closure Decision Tool document which was used to inform the closure of DOC tracks and visitor sites in response to cyclone Gabrielle is provided as Item 1 (as outlined in the table below).

Key factors informing the closure

Track damage and physical instability

Storm events caused substantial erosion and undermining of sections of the track. In places the track alignment has been compromised, creating unsafe walking conditions and increased risk

of further failure during high rainfall or storm surge events. Remediation would require major earthworks and realignment to achieve a stable and sustainable track formation.

Land tenure constraints

The existing track entrance and sections of the alignment cross privately owned land. Access arrangements are no longer suitable for ongoing public use and would require formal legal agreements or alternative route development. This significantly constrains reinstatement options and adds complexity, cost and risk to any potential reopening.

Unbridged water crossings and safety standards

The track includes unbridged stream and river crossings that do not align with DOC's current visitor safety standards for public walking tracks. To meet modern safety expectations and risk management requirements, permanent bridging or alternative alignments would be required. These works would involve substantial capital investment and ongoing maintenance obligations both of which require consideration of affordability.

Cultural and iwi considerations

The area has recognised cultural significance to local iwi. Engagement to date has indicated concerns about proposed rerouting options through culturally sensitive areas. DOC is committed to honouring Treaty partnership obligations and ensuring that any future development respects cultural values, waahi tapu considerations, and iwi aspirations. At present, no agreed alternative alignment has been identified that is acceptable to all parties.

Kauri dieback risk

Kauri trees are present within and adjacent to the track corridor. Any reinstatement would require significant biosecurity controls to manage the risk of *Phytophthora agathidicida* (kauri dieback disease), including track upgrades, hygiene infrastructure, and ongoing compliance management. The cost of mitigation and long-term management is currently prohibitive relative to available funding and competing conservation priorities.

Financial and operational prioritisation

DOC is operating within constrained budgets and must prioritise investment toward assets delivering the highest safety, conservation and visitor outcomes across the network. Given the cumulative risks, complexity, and cost associated with reinstating this track, the project has not been prioritised for capital funding or delivery at this time.

Decision

Considering the combined impacts of physical damage, land access limitations, visitor safety requirements, cultural considerations, kauri protection obligations, and financial constraints, DOC determined the Matamataharakeke Track will remain closed until such time as conditions materially change and a viable, culturally acceptable and affordable solution can be identified.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	10 Feb 2023	Interim PCL Closures Decision Tool - DOC-7265435 process for site closures require re TC Gabrielle	Released in full

2. *It is noted that there is a private hut off the track, the Harakeke Hut, which appears to be on the DoC Estate and only accessible from the track. Please provide documentation as to the establishment of this Hut, what concessions were given by DoC to access the track and on what basis. Please also address of there is a lease or whether there was a sale of portion of land to establish the hut.”*

The “Harakeke Hut” in question is situated on private land, and therefore permission is not required by the Department. The section of track from Tuatēawa Road used for accessing the hut is not on land administered by DOC. This aspect of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Official information Act – as the information requested does not exist.

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 this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached document may be published on DOC’s website.

[REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā



Tinaka Mearns

Director Hauraki, Waikato, Taranaki
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai