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Ref: OIAD-6015

09 February 2026

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received as a transfer from the Department of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Conservation, on 15 January 2026. You asked for information regarding changes to the Cape Brett Track at Oke Bay, Northland.

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

The Cape Brett Track has been a cooperative venture between the Te Rawhiti 3B2 Ahu Whenua Trust and DOC since 2001. The track is 16.3 km long; 6km of the track is on Public Conservation Land and 10 km of the track passes over private land owned by the Te Rawhiti 3B2 Ahu Whenua Trust. This section of the track is run and maintained by the Trust's agent, Cape Brett Walkways Ltd, and they are responsible for track route decisions on their land.

In November 2025, the Department communicated with affected parties regarding scheduled maintenance and upgrade work on the Oke Bay staircase to enable safer access for day visitors. Through this process the Department became aware that the Cape Brett track had been re-routed on Trust land at the southern end of Oke Bay. DOC was not involved in the decision to alter the track.

Although the Bay of Islands office was aware that options were being considered by Cape Brett Walkways to re-route the track, we were neither involved in assessing or approving any of the options nor in implementing the re-route.

Construction work to upgrade the Oke Bay staircase will take place in May 2026 requiring closure of the track down to the beach during works.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. Please advise who authorised the 'change' to the start of this track*
- 2. Please advise why was this change made*
- 3. Please advise what issues there were/may have been to existing track before this change*

In response to your questions 1, 2, and 3, I regret that I cannot provide you with the information you seek as DOC was not involved in the decision to alter the track. Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused in accordance with section 18(g)(i) of the OIA as the information is not held by DOC, and we do not have grounds for believing that the information is held by another department to which we could transfer to under section 14 of the OIA.

- 4. Did it require Resource Consent*

DOC is not aware of any consents that were required to alter the track.

5. *Is 'DOC' aware that this change has added approximately 15 - 20 minutes onto the time?*

DOC is aware that the recent changes result in additional walking time to complete the track.

6. *Is 'DOC' aware that*

- a. the track is therefore more difficult*
- b. that the risk of injury or even drowning to trampers has increased - particularly regarding state of tide and navigating around a rocky outcrop.*
- c. that trampers will be constrained by the tide - or get wet*

The track has always been classed as an 'Advanced Tramping Track' which requires a high level of fitness and can be mostly unformed, rough and steep, with river crossing skills and experience often required. Upon being notified of the changes to the track, the Department took immediate steps to inform the public on its website of the new route and additional considerations to take into account regarding safety, please see - [Cape Brett Track Web Link](#).

7. *Was Resource Management Consent required for any felling of ti-tree and the like*

As per question 4, DOC is not aware of any consents that were required for this work.

8. *Doc charges a fee for walking this track - please advise if DOC has full use of funds collected or are they (in total or part) disbursed to other vested interested parties - and if so to whom*

DOC is the booking agent for the Cape Brett Track and the Department retains a 15% booking fee. The remaining revenue is sent to Cape Brett Walkways.

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.

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Nāku noa, nā



Sue Reed-Thomas
Regional Operations Director, Northern North Island
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai