



# Initial Strategic Plan and Preliminary Business Case

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Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

Destination Hauraki Coromandel September 2022



This report was prepared by TRC Tourism together with, and for Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust with funding from Destination Coromandel (through the Strategic Tourism Asset Protection Fund) and the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

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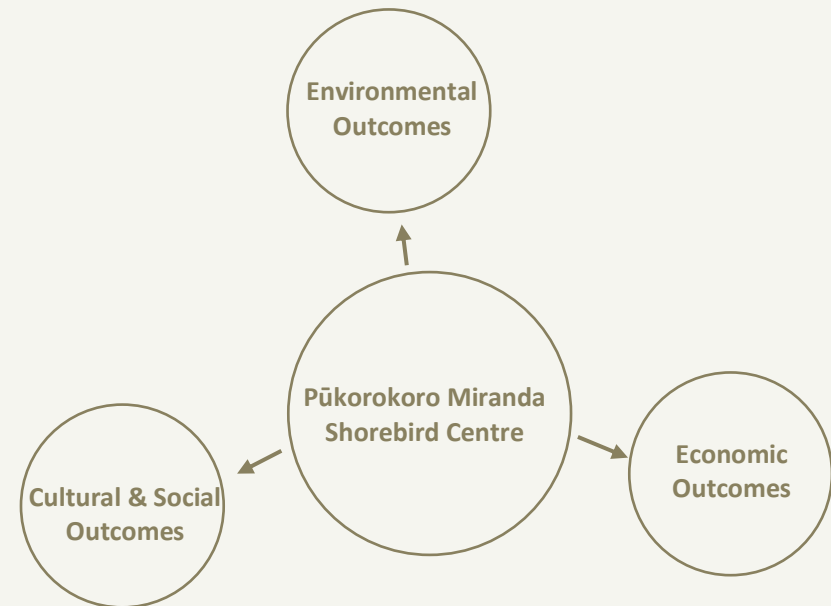
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# Executive Summary

Located on the Firth of Thames/Tikapa Moana, Pūkoro-Miranda is an internationally significant 8,500 hectare coastal wetland that is protected under the Ramsar Convention. The catchment is home to around 40 different migratory birds, including red knots and bar-tailed godwits that fly from Pūkoro-Miranda to Siberia or Alaska (respectively) and back every year. These migratory shorebirds rely on the resting and refuelling areas in this catchment, including one of the world’s finest examples of a rare coastal landform – a Chenier plain – consisting of a series of ridges made up of marine shells.<sup>1</sup>

The Pūkoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre (PMSC, or the Centre) is a community facility for information, education, and research on shorebirds. The Centre opened in 1990 and is owned and operated by the Pūkoro-Miranda Naturalists’ Trust (PMNT), founded in 1975. Along with running the visitor centre with accompanying basic accommodation, staff and volunteers have been working to maintain and restore the shorebird habitat and the provision of bird viewing access at the nearby Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve.

For the Trust to continue and further restore the shorebird coast environment, there is significant opportunity to spread the story of the shorebird by planning for and engaging a broader audience; thereby providing wider reaching environmental, cultural, social and community benefits.



An earlier feasibility report commissioned by Destination Coromandel in 2021<sup>2</sup> concluded that there is significant scope for the PMSC to become a world class eco-tourism, conservation, and education experience. Before progressing any further however, work was required to ensure that the vision of the Trust was internally aligned and that they were committed in their view of tourism and the wider visitor economy as a powerful long-term enabler that is closely aligned and symbiotic with their overarching conservation goals.

Workshops run with the Trust uncovered the greatest challenge for the Trust is the human resource required to plan and manage the development of an eco-tourism visitor experience at the Centre.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.livingwater.net.nz/catchment/pukoroko-miranda/>

<sup>2</sup> Destination Coromandel Product Development and Industry Capability – Feasibility Study, Pūkoro-Miranda Shorebird Centre 2021



This report – a combination of an Initial Strategic Plan and Preliminary Business Case, serves the purpose of developing a strategic direction for the Trust, in addition to a preliminary business case for external funding applications (in the immediate term) for a Business Development Officer (BDO). The BDO role is essential in further developing relationships and together with the Centre Manager, working through some key decisions still to be made or refined so that a full business case for the development of the eco-tourism visitor experience can be developed.

The following figure (1) outlines the purpose, vision, guiding principles and goals for the Trust. An action plan has then been formulated under the strategic areas of Governance and Staffing; Planning and Development of the Visitor Experience; Core Conservation and Biodiversity; Marketing and communications; and Sustainable Funding.

An initial top line assessment of the potential of the centre to increase visitor numbers and generate revenue is estimated at 35,000 visitors generating a revenue of approximately \$875,000 p.a. by 2035.

This is first about how visitors can help the shorebirds, then how the shorebirds can help enlighten visitors to be environmental advocates.

**Figure 1.** PMNT Strategic Direction

**Purpose: Keep the birds coming** by instilling a wider appreciation and connection with nature by sharing the story of the shorebirds.

**Vision:** the Pūkoro shorebird coast is a world-renowned conservation site – host to a thriving shorebird population, inspiring conservation at a local and global scale, and providing wide reaching social and cultural benefits.

**Guiding principles:**

- Learning and sharing – understanding and connecting with the unique natural and cultural heritage (Mātauranga)
- Environmental enhancement and protection (Kaitiakitanga)
- Community involvement and collaboration (Kotahitanga) incl global community
- Regenerative model – giving back to community and environment.

**Goals towards achieving this purpose and vision:**

- a thriving shorebird population and coastal environment (keep the birds coming!)
- champion a cohesive experience along the shorebird coast (partnerships)
- provide opportunities for visitors and locals to engage with the stories of the shorebirds and their environment (culturally, socially, environmentally)
- provide mutual benefits to community/stakeholders and visitors: environmentally, culturally, socially and economically
- leaders in global migratory birds (research, education and communication – telling the story).

**Enablers:**

- Governance and leadership
- Adopting regenerative tourism as an enabler towards a self-sustaining operation to achieve sustainable long-term resourcing
- Resilience planning and future proofing for sea level rise and floods
- Marketing and Communications.

# 1. Objectives of this plan

A feasibility report commissioned by Destination Coromandel in 2021<sup>3</sup> concluded that there is significant scope for the PMSC to become a world class eco-tourism, conservation, and education experience. Before progressing any further however, it was identified that additional work was required to ensure that the vision of the Trust was aligned, and that they were committed in their view of tourism and the wider visitor economy as a powerful long-term enabler that is closely aligned and symbiotic with their overarching conservation goals.

Workshops run with the Trust uncovered the greatest challenge for the Trust is the human resource required to plan and manage the development of an eco-tourism visitor experience at the Centre.

This report is therefore a combination of an Initial Strategic Plan and Preliminary Business Case. It serves the purpose of developing a strategic direction for the Trust, which is the first step required, in addition to a preliminary business case to be able to apply for external funding (in the immediate term) for a Business Development Officer to drive a new stage in the development of the Centre.

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<sup>3</sup> Destination Coromandel Product Development and Industry Capability – Feasibility Study, Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre 2021



## 2. The current situation

### Overview of the Centre

Pūkorooro Miranda Shorebird Centre (opened in 1990) is a community facility for information, education and research on migratory and resident shorebirds, open to the public seven days a week. The Centre offers information panels, a gift shop, accommodation, and a meeting/lounge space. The three bird viewing hides are 2km down the road from the Centre, accessible from the Centre via a basic walking path and the Hauraki Rail Trail cycle path.

Staff and volunteers run a research programme (including the tracking of arctic migrants), free guided tours over summer, education visits, seminars and courses, and habitat restoration and trapping programmes.

Further details of the product and services are included in appendix B.

The Centre and the land the viewing hides are on is owned and operated by the Pūkorooro Miranda Naturalists' Trust (founded in 1975) - an independent charitable trust. Current membership is 780, and there are more than 50 active volunteers involved.

The Centre is located in Pūkorooro Miranda in the Hauraki district, in close proximity (within an hour) of the population bases of Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga.

### Broader context: Pūkorooro Miranda coast

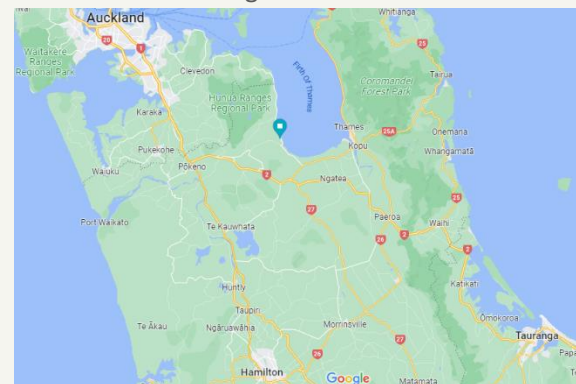
There are two adjacent reserves that make up the broader shorebird coast including:

*Repo ki Pūkorooro reserve* - the creation of a new Crown owned reserve (designated as a Wildlife Management Reserve) over the road from the Robert Findlay Reserve aims to rehabilitate the whole Pūkorooro-Miranda stream catchment and stopping silt from the rivers affecting the marine area round the Robert Findlay Reserve.

The reserve is managed by the Tiaki Repo ki Pūkorooro Trust (TRKP) and the Living Water partnership<sup>4</sup> has provided initial funding for the project of \$50,000 a year until 2023 (potentially longer).

*Taramaire Government Purpose Wildlife Management Reserve* – administered by the Department of Conservation Miranda and situated across the road from the PMSC.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2.** Location and proximity to population centres – Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga



<sup>4</sup> DOC and Fonterra <https://www.livingwater.net.nz/catchment/pukorooro-miranda/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/habitats/wetlands/wetlands-by-region/waikato/firth-of-thames/>

## Visitor numbers and nights<sup>6</sup>

The Visitor Centre (VC) currently receives 12,209<sup>7</sup> visitors per annum (does not include those visitors to the hides only) and 235 bed nights (bunks). Prior to COVID international visitors to the VC made up an estimated 40% of total visitors (majority from UK, followed by Australia, USA, and China), but numbers continued to climb during COVID with an increase in domestic visitation making up any shortfall.

Seasonality has a major impact with the majority of visits occurring over the warmer months when there are also more migratory birds (Oct – April)<sup>8</sup>.

## Staff and board

The Trust council is currently made up of 10 members, some of whom are founding members.

The Centre has a full time Manager, a part time Centre Assistant (3 days), and a summer shore guide (approximately 35 hours a week between October and early April - contingent on sourcing additional funding).

The Centre has recently obtained funding for a full time Kaitiaki/Ranger for five years and a part time Ranger for two years, positions due to start in September 2022.

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<sup>6</sup> Change in how visitor numbers were recorded 2020 onwards. Now all visitors to the Centre are counted where previously it was more ad-hoc.

## Financials

The main sources of income for the Trust are membership subscriptions, donations, accommodation revenue, retail sales, grants, and bequests.

Over the past three years the Trust has had an operating surplus/deficit of:

-\$84,274 in 2019 (total net income 216,982 and expenses of 301,256)

\$42,854 in 2020, (total net income of 259,855 and expenses of 199,511)

-\$20,598 in 2021 (total net income of 178,913, and expenses of 217,003)

## Other-partners

Ngāti Pāoa – local iwi who hold the treaty settlement rights over the immediate area – are partnering with the PMNT to protect and enhance both the natural and culture importance of the area and the shorebirds into the future.

<sup>7</sup> Year end Dec 2021

<sup>8</sup> PMNT Visitor Numbers



Figure 3. Land boundary map



# 3. Key issues and challenges

## Internal

- The Trust and its operation have outgrown the current building
- The Trust has been running a deficit for a number of years (except 2020)
- Lack of resource (staff and Trust member time, and financial) to plan for and implement significant revenue generating projects
- A level of hesitancy and nervousness to make significant changes
- Projects to date have been largely driven by personal interest areas of Trust council members (versus an overall plan)
- The visitor centre and information displays contained within are somewhat dated.
- Don't want to detract from the Centre's purpose and become a car park for other attractions
- The land is on a high-risk flood prone area with implications for infrastructure (access, paths, hides, existing and future buildings and services)
- Inability to charge an entry fee at the Robert Findlay Reserve limiting revenue generating options
- Distance between the Visitor Centre and shorebirds/Robert Findlay Reserve<sup>9</sup>
- The existing site of the PMSC is restricted in terms of the usable space
- Traffic control & road safety: The existing PMSC site is located on the outside of a corner on East Coast Road. This is a fast section of road with relatively limited visibility when it comes to oncoming traffic. Whilst this was considered not to be an issue in the planning of the cycle trail, it could become a concern as visitation rates increase.

<sup>9</sup> Retention of the facility at the existing site does not address the issue of its distance from the main shorebird viewing area. This means that in situations where a 30minute walk is not feasible (e.g., mobility issues, short of time, or adverse weather) visitors will need to get back in their cars after the visitor centre to drive down to Robert Findlay Reserve to access the bird hides. For most casual visitors the marginal attractiveness of the experience is unlikely to compel them to make a second stop at this destination. It may also be that with better information available online about the Robert Findlay Reserve, visitors will stop there and bypass the visitor centre, particularly as this location now has a toilet facility

<sup>10</sup><https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/05/220505114633.htm?fbclid=IwAR0N3q8GJa9EmxAsNvB4ljggMT0ZHxqH8TPrmjed27FFmQsbhM10cP6qWBw>

## External

- The nature of migratory birds – only able to manage Pūkorokoro habitat and hope to influence other locations. There is a global decline in bird populations<sup>10</sup>
- A high reliance on the shorebirds themselves, with no guarantee that they will remain in the area should dramatic changes occur in the surrounding ecosystem
- The natural environment surrounding PMSC is under threat from a number of factors including drainage issues, pest weeds/fish, sedimentation and loss of biodiversity
- Decline in the Hauraki ecosystem<sup>11</sup>
- Tides: Optimal viewing of the shorebirds is restricted to two hours either side of the high tide
- Long term access to the centre and Robert Findlay Reserve via East Coast road due to sea level rise and flooding<sup>12</sup>
- Ability to obtain building & environmental consents for future development.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <https://gulffjournal.org.nz/2021/11/the-state-of-our-seabirds/>

<sup>12</sup> Coastal inundation prediction tools provided by the Waikato Regional Council show Miranda Pūkorokoro to be one of the first areas in New Zealand to be inundated should sea-level rise patterns continue

<sup>13</sup> The area sits within the Seabird Coast Management Area of the District Plan and while further detailed advice will be required to fully understand the development constraints, it is likely extension of the existing, or construction of new buildings will be limited by the local planning instruments







## 4. The opportunity

- Pūkoro Miranda listed as an internationally significant wetland under the Ramsar Convention
- PMNT is open to splitting the operation into members/research, accommodation at the existing site and a separate visitor experience at the new block of land (grazing block) which is closer to the RFR
- Further developing relationships and partnerships with Ngāti Pāoa and other local iwi/hapu
- PMNT has strong international ties via the East-Asian Australasian 'Flyway' (Godwits and Knots) and is an East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership partner.
- The PMSC is surrounded by stunning natural (wetland) scenery
- Availability of passionate shorebird experts and volunteers to help facilitate positive experiences
- Proximity to Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua and Tauranga markets.
- Proximity to Auckland Airport (1hr).
- Touring route from Akl – along seabird shore (from Clevedon)
- On route to Coromandel – a popular destination for the Auckland market, high volume of passers-by
- Lack of direct competitors in area, but a need for more visitor experiences
- An established and well received education programme
- Wider education over and above shorebird biology - Climate change/ sea level rise education
- Hauraki cycle trail - 10,000 going past the centre per annum (despite not officially opened due to wash outs)– opportunities for provision of accommodation, food guided tours and admission.<sup>14</sup>
- Development of a walking and cycling recreational route through the Hunua Ranges linking Clevedon to Kaiaua on the Firth of Thames (due to open late 2022).
- Several like-minded organisations operating conservation-focused initiatives in the area
- The PMSC enjoys a positive relationship with Ngāti Pāoa, who are developing their own tourism initiatives nearby
- Neighbouring land Repo ki Pūkoro established as a reserve
- Visitors looking to immerse in local, authentic experiences (heightened by covid)
- NZ's outdoors, nature and parks are currently the most searched for things to do in New Zealand by international visitors.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hauraki Rail Tail counts

<sup>15</sup> Tripadvisor searches for NZ, the most out of all experience types within NZ (48%) (April 2022)

## 5. Benefits<sup>16</sup>

The development of the PMSC visitor experience towards a regenerative tourism model (tourism that gives back to the local community and environment) will enable the PMNT to provide visitors with a unique and very special experience, while also ensuring their visit makes positive contributions to the area across all four wellbeing pillars.



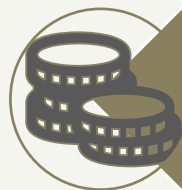
*Environmental:* The most important of all potential benefits is helping to ensure positive outcomes for the shorebirds themselves. While this may seem obvious, less obvious is finding the correct balance of focus between specific, short-term conservation projects, and ‘big-picture’, longer-term programmes. The proposed (broader) PMSC experience would ideally find this balance, ensuring the immediate care and protection of the shorebirds and their habitat through physical and/or financial visitor contributions, alongside an equally important education programme, which (in the long run) would hope to have a far greater ecological impact.



*Social:* The issue of impending coastal inundation is something that will likely have an increasing impact on the local community in the future. There is an opportunity to pull together both the resident and conservation communities and work collaboratively towards the collective goal of mitigating this. The positive and widely admired work of the PMNT, together with a greatly enhanced visitor experience, will help the visitor centre become a source of great pride for the local community – one that is pivotal to the social fabric of the Northern Hauraki region.



*Cultural:* The PMNT are very fortunate to have been offered stories and accompanying mātauranga (traditional knowledge) surrounding the shorebirds from the local Ngāti Pāoa people. Having the opportunity to tell these stories and share traditional knowledge through the revised visitor experience will empower the Ngāti Pāoa people and ensure their culture is celebrated as these stories are shared with visitors into the future. Similarly, the redevelopment will also allow the PMNT and wider community of shorebird enthusiasts the increased opportunity to share and celebrate their own unique culture and stories.



*Economic:* The potential economic impact for the PMNT could be significant as the redevelopment brings added direct revenue through the selling of engaging visitor experiences and increased donations. This would also be economically beneficial to the wider community, as the visitor economy is enhanced and leveraged to its full potential through increased spending on local goods and services.

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from the Destination Coromandel Product Development and Industry Capability – Feasibility Study, Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre 2021

## 6. Key lessons from conservation-based visitor experiences

A number of insights and key lessons learned have been identified from established nature and bird focused visitor experiences.<sup>17</sup> These include:

- Strong leadership and a focus on quality experiences and adding value to the visitor experience is a key to success
- Specific skills are required to move from a community organisation to a more commercially focused operation, including, in particular, business operations, as well as philanthropy, grant facilitation, membership, and volunteer management
- Importance of local community involvement and ongoing access for locals
- Tourism can be symbiotic with and deliver conservation and community outcomes
- Importance of incorporating te ao Māori
- A wide range of revenue sources, beyond operational revenues from entry fees, retail sales and the like, are required to be able to achieve financial security
- Margins are generally tight, with organisations often jumping between profit and loss form year to year. Environmental, community and educational gains are the true benefits.
- Souvenir shops are good revenue streams with careful management of price points and merchandise
- Food and beverage offer needs to be at a scale appropriate to the scale and location
- Destination cafes attract visitors in themselves, but can be difficult to manage given typically high staff costs and turnover
- Dependency on the ongoing support of volunteers
- Progression towards paid guides to maintain consistency and provide employment
- Recent visitor centre developments in New Zealand are often partnerships between DOC and/or iwi, and/or local council (e.g. Dolomite Point, Zealandia, Kapiti Te Uruhi)
- Recent significant increases in building and development costs leading towards a staged approach
- Operations that don't have a local or central government partnership are generally still reliant on grants from these agencies for conservation projects
- Easy access to the attraction (e.g. shuttles) increases visitor numbers
- Relationships with universities for research and potential funding grants can be very valuable.

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<sup>17</sup> Further case study details can be found in Appendix C





# 7. Purpose, vision, goals, and guiding principles

## Purpose:

**Keep the birds coming** by instilling a wider appreciation and connection with nature by sharing the story of the shorebirds.

## Vision:

The Pūkoro shorebird coast is a world-renowned conservation site – host to a thriving shorebird population, inspiring conservation at a local and global scale, and providing wide reaching social and cultural benefits.

## Guiding principles:

- Learning and sharing – understanding and connecting with the unique natural and cultural heritage (Mātauranga)
- Environmental enhancement and protection (Kaitiakitanga)
- Community involvement and collaboration (Kotahitanga) incl global community
- Regenerative model – giving back to community and environment

## Goals towards achieving this purpose and vision:

- a thriving shorebird population and coastal environment (keep the birds coming!)
- champion a cohesive experience along the shorebird coast (partnerships)
- provide opportunities for visitors and locals to engage with the stories of the shorebirds and their environment (culturally, socially, environmentally)
- provide mutual benefits to community/stakeholders and visitors: environmentally, culturally, socially, and economically
- leaders in global migratory birds (research, education, and communication – telling the story).

## Enablers:

- Governance and leadership
- Adopting regenerative tourism as an enabler towards a self-sustaining operation to achieve sustainable long-term resourcing
- Resilience planning and future proofing for sea level rise and floods
- Marketing and Communications.







# 8. Strategic focus areas

## Governance and Staffing

For the Trust to be able to realise the long-term vision, a progressive change in its business and operating model is required. This change would see a shift towards a regenerative tourism model – utilising tourism as an enabler to deliver environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits locally and globally.

The Trust would need to expand the physical, financial, and human resource aspects of the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre (including the Robert Findlay Reserve and the Protected private land block (52791)).

A first and essential action in this process would be the appointment of a Business Development Officer, who, together with the Centre’s Manager will drive this next step in the Centre’s development. The BDO’s role would be to refine and further develop plans for the visitor experience, work to develop external relationships, and seek funding for the development of the visitor experience. The BDO would be required to have require strategic and fundraising skills to complement the existing conservation and education-oriented skills of the current staff.

As the PMSC develops, it will require staff (or contractors) to oversee delivery of the visitor experience, education programmes/guiding, the conservation/biodiversity programme, marketing and communications, membership, finance, commercial (e.g. gift shop, hospitality), fundraising and partnerships, research programme, maintenance, and volunteer management. Succession planning/future proofing is also required to reduce the reliance currently on key personnel.

Based on the proposed functions of PMSC, overtime the PMNT would ideally transition towards a board with a more strategic versus operational role, with representation potentially including expertise in tourism, business,

conservation/biodiversity, education, and marketing/communications, in addition to iwi representation. Advisory groups covering specialist areas could be formed on an as needed basis. For an example of the differentiation between the roles of boards and operational staff please refer to Appendix A.

In the first instance the Board could potentially include a representative from Destination Hauraki Coromandel.

### Key actions:

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
<b>Employ a BDO</b>	Immediate	Trust Chair/ subcommittee of the Trust, support from Destination Coromandel
<b>Progressively transition to board with wider expertise and specialist advisory groups</b>	Medium term once a BDO is in place	Existing Trust Board potentially assisted by external professional
<b>Revise staff requirements for short, medium and longer terms</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager
<b>Continue refining strategy and developing business case</b>	Medium term	BDO, Centre Manager, Trust Board, consultancy advice
<b>Continue to develop partnerships with iwi, DOC, TRP, landowners, Ecoquest etc</b>	Medium term	BDO
<b>Grow and manage the volunteer programme</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager and appointed staff

## Core Conservation and Biodiversity

The PMSC has the potential to be established as a leader in global migratory bird research and environmental coastal ecology, incorporating mud flat ecology and mātaurangi Māori.

The wider conservation goal is for coastal regeneration and progressing towards restoring the health of the wider Firth of Thames catchment.

Specific goals include the long-term provision of shorebird habitat and safe roosting sites.

There is significant opportunity to integrate conservation and biodiversity programmes into the visitor experience through education programmes, guided and virtual tours, conservation courses, and interactive interpretive information.

There is also opportunity to expand relationships with universities and other research institutes, both in New Zealand and offshore, and further develop local partnerships for rehabilitation and biodiversity programmes.

## Key actions:

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
<b>Integrated pest control programme</b>	Immediate	Ranger/volunteers
<b>Regenerative native coastal plantings and mangrove control plan (return of wetland in long term)</b>	Immediate	Ranger/volunteers
<b>Additional planting days/ working bees – promoted to additional groups</b>	Immediate	Ranger/volunteers
<b>Water management plan</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager/Ranger
<b>Monitored biodiversity and breeding programme</b>	Medium term	Ranger/volunteers
<b>Redevelop existing building to basic research facility</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager/BDO
<b>Build the research programme – links to tertiary institutions and other partners (e.g. Ecoquest, DOC), publish papers, provide scholarships</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager/ BDO/staff
<b>Provide strategic input into relevant plans: e.g. the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan to make it easier for the Trust to undertake work in future (e.g. mangrove removal)</b>		Centre Manager/BDO, Trust Board sub committee
<b>Build partnerships for planting and biodiversity initiatives, e.g. with TRKP, DOC, community groups, school groups etc.</b>	Medium term	Centre Manager/staff/ BDO

## Planning and Development of the Visitor Experience

To become a world-renowned conservation site delivering a cohesive and engaging visitor experience, significant work needs to be undertaken into developing the visitor experience.

A separate feasibility study was completed regarding the potential redevelopment of the PMSC into a world class eco-tourism, conservation, and education experience identified the potential options available to reinvigorate the visitor experience at the existing site.<sup>18</sup>

From this report, there are some short-mid term actions and developments (section 3 Visitor Experience Enhancement) including:

- Improving the sense of arrival at the centre – including signage, the facade of the building, the road entrance and vehicle parking
- Improved pathways, including wayfinding and interpretative signage, shelters, and seating
- Stationary high-powered optics for wildlife viewing at a distance (ideally from towers)
- Paid regular guided tours (including cultural interpretation), and/or the use of geofencing technology to deliver an audio or audio/visual assisted self-guided experience
- Development of a hands on ‘conservation experience’
- Redevelopment of the hides for future weather events and improved viewing experience (interpretation, optics etc)
- Facilities for cyclists to better access the hides from the Hauraki Rail Trail (e.g. bike racks with locking mechanisms)

- Electric shuttle running between the Centre and the Robert Findley Reserve
- Basic food and beverage offer via an existing business (e.g. a coffee cart)

In the longer term an option for the Trust is to split the operation into two functions with the existing Visitor Centre building becoming a member and research facility with upgraded and potentially additional accommodation, and for the protected private land to be restored into a wetland with a purpose built, climatically resilient, eco-designed visitor interpretation centre, potentially including:

- interactive displays and interpretation (in partnership with DOC and Ngāti Pāoa),
- a lecture theatre for students and seminars,
- an expanded souvenir shop,
- a full destination café (leased to an existing business), potentially with a themed children’s playground,
- improved access/linkages with the RFR, and
- supporting infrastructure

The feasibility report identifies this potential in further detail (refer appendix 9 of the Feasibility Study: Overview of Redevelopment Options, Option 3). To progress with the new Visitor Centre concept further plans would be required to refine the visitor experience story and mechanisms for delivery, and a detailed business case, and a physical/master plan.

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<sup>18</sup> Destination Coromandel Product Development and Industry Capability – Feasibility Study, Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre 2021

## Key actions:

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
Improve sense of arrival and wayfinding (incl shelters, viewing access, and interpretation)	Immediate	Centre Manager and Staff
Repair, enhance and future proof viewing hides	Immediate	Centre Manager and Staff
Develop a paid guided experience (in partnership with Ngāti Pāoa in the mid-term), and packaged conservation experiences	Short - mid term	Centre Manager and BDO
Develop a guide training program to ensure quality/consistent experience and integrate cultural aspects	Mid term	Centre Manager and BDO
Investigate partnership with local food and beverage provider (initially basic provisions)	Short – mid term	BDO
Investigate and implement a green transport option between VC and hides	Mid term	BDO
Continue to develop resources and programmes for education visits	Mid term	Staff and volunteers
Continue to develop plans and partnerships for a fit for purpose and climatically resilient interactive visitor centre and experience at the ‘private land block’	Longer term	BDO
Re purpose existing buildings for members, research facilities and additional/improved accommodation to meet wider visitor market needs Include further flood protection/mitigation measures	Longer term	Centre Manager and BDO





## Marketing and Communications

The PMNT will need to revisit their past communications plan and develop it into a comprehensive marketing and communications plan to reflect the changing focus over time towards a broader visitor market. The plan needs to identify the broader visitor market segments (existing and potential), how they will be reached, and what message(s) to communicate. The target markets and messages will evolve as the visitor experience develops.

An initial assessment of potential target markets is included in Appendix D.

The intention of the plan will not only be to encourage visitation, but also drive an increase in membership. Communications with local communities of what the Trust is up to and how residents can get involved is equally important.

The plan should incorporate a stronger online presence and identify joint-marketing partnerships with complementary businesses and institutions.

Working towards environmental and quality tourism accreditation and awards (such as Qualmark Sustainable Tourism Business Award, and the New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment) provides environmental and community benefits as well as a promotional tool.

Opportunities to communicate and engage with local community/stakeholders could include additional open days, volunteering/project days (eg with schools), youth programmes, and seminars/workshops/guest speakers.

Member and enthusiast communications could be modernised to attract a wider following (i.e. an e-newsletter replacing the printed newsletter).

There are several digital platforms the PMSC could utilise to deliver a virtual shorebird experience to viewers anywhere in the world as part of driving awareness. This is particularly aligned with the PMSC offering given the global migration patterns of the shorebirds, and associated alliances such as the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).

## Key actions:

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
<b>Develop/implement a marketing and communications plan</b>	Immediate – mid term	BDO, staff, Trust Board sub committee
<b>Apply for and work towards tourism and environmental accreditation</b>	Mid term	BDO and relevant staff
<b>Enter tourism and environmental awards</b>	Mid term	BDO and relevant staff
<b>Enhanced links with education institutions (for education visits, research programmes, guest speakers etc)</b>	Mid term	BDO
<b>Identify additional opportunities for community involvement and engagement (guided open days, events, seminars etc)</b>	Short term	BDO and relevant staff
<b>Develop active membership and ongoing connection programme</b>	Underway	BDO and relevant staff

## Sustainable Funding

The main challenge the Trust faces in achieving its vision is the funding required to enable the next step in its operation – specifically, human resource to implement the change, capital funding to develop the visitor experience, and ongoing operational funding.

Initial funding is required for a BDO for the PMSC. In turn, the BDO will then be able to seek capital and potentially operational funding to implement changes.

Developing the visitor experience to attract a wider market and enabling revenue generating products and services will provide additional revenue streams.

The broadening of the visitor experience to facilitate wider environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes will provide the PMNT improved access to additional funding channels and enhanced levels of support.

There is also the potential to obtain Blue carbon<sup>19</sup> (sequestration of carbon via salt marsh/mangrove/wetlands) potentially providing carbon credits, and playing part of the wider enviro story to tell.

There is an opportunity to gain additional funding by improving the manner in which voluntary donations are requested. With mobile technology and digital payment platforms as they now are, these requests could be incorporated into the interpretive signage mentioned above, with a clear and easy payment channel made available. This is especially relevant for the RFR which attracts visitors who do not stop at the Visitor Centre and currently have no clear and easy method to donate.

Actively growing membership numbers (via marketing and communications, and utilising digital platforms mentioned above) would also achieve multiple objectives - financial, awareness creation, education.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.thebluecarboninitiative.org/>

In a similar vein to the Fonterra/DoC ‘Living Water’, there is the opportunity to partner with other aligned organisations and/or brands that would gain public relations (PR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) value from supporting the Shorebird Centre and PMNT.

## Key actions:

Action	Timeframe	Responsibility
<b>Funding for a BDO</b>	Immediate	Centre Manager/ subcommittee of the Trust Board, support from Destination Hauraki Coromandel
<b>Mentor for change management (dependent on skill range of the BDO and board)</b>	Mid term	
<b>Revise donation mechanisms</b>	Immediate	BDO
<b>Capital funding for the development of a fit for purpose VC (potentially in partnership with iwi/DOC)</b>	Mid term	BDO and Trust Board
<b>Project based funding (from council’s, DOC, Trusts, corporate sponsorship – with aligning principles)</b>	Immediate – long term	BDO and relevant staff
<b>General fundraising and ongoing membership initiatives</b>	Immediate – long term	BDO and relevant staff
<b>Investigate ‘blue carbon’ as a longer-term potential revenue source (via sponsorship or credits)</b>	Medium – long term	Centre Manager, BDO, and Trust Board

## 9. Potential visitor modelling and revenue

Refocussing the governance and management of Pūkoro Mirānda Naturalists' Trust aims to provide the skills and resources to consolidate the considerable conservation and education efforts to date and create a sustainable organisation for the future.

While reconstituting the Board should be achieved at little cost, the uplift in business development and funding capability will require employment of a new BDO for the Trust. The new position has the potential to oversee initiatives leading to a growth in visitor numbers and revenue per visitor.

### Current site visitation

Only visitors to the Shorebird Visitor Centre are included in existing visitor numbers. This excludes visitors who go direct to the hides and Robert Findlay Reserve. It also excludes cycle trail users.

The system for counting visitors has changed and improved in recent years so all visitors into the Centre are now captured. Because of this comparison with earlier years is difficult.

	Visitor Centre	Bed nights
YE Dec 2020	15,929	397
YE Dec 2021	12,209	235

Obviously, visitor numbers have been affected by COVID restrictions however the numbers demonstrate strong performance despite the loss of international visitors (that made up approximately 40% of visitors to the VC in 2019).

Data available suggests there are around 10,000 cyclists on the Kaiaua section of the Hauraki rail trail. There are new trails and trail sections opening soon that are expected to attract additional trail users.

Providing facilities and services attractive to trail users, then “converting” them to Shorebird visitors, is an important potential for growth (and education).

Visitors to Hauraki and the Coromandel region are also potential visitors to the site and annually these number 22,800 staying overnight in commercial accommodation for Hauraki and 265,200 staying overnight in Coromandel.<sup>20</sup>

Nearby Miranda Holiday Park has approximately 54,000 visitors each year.

Active programmes to increase the attractiveness of the site and the existing visitor centre to these general “tourist” visitors to the area will increase numbers and revenues. Many of these initiatives could be achieved by a new business focussed BDO at the site.

A new visitor centre development has the potential to significantly increase visitors to the site and potentially the region.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, Accommodation Data Programme Y.E April 2022



## Comparison with other centres

Other centres focussed on conservation outcomes have been considered. While visitor numbers are largely a function of location and access to large population centres, they can provide a good indication of the potential spend per visitor.

	Visits	Finances	Comment
<b>Pūkorooro Miranda</b>	12,209 (to visitor centre)	-\$20,598 (deficit) \$178,913 revenue \$217,003 expenses	
<b>Tiritiri Matangi</b>	12,500 visits (24,000 pre covid), 6.5k on guided tours, 3,400 school students	\$10,037 (profit) 435,284 revenue, 323,907 expenses	DOC funds ranger positions
<b>Pūkaha Mt Bruce</b>	42,500 visits	-\$12,050 (deficit) \$2,036,517 revenue, \$2,048,568 expenses  average spend per visitor = \$22.77	
<b>Zealandia</b>	121,729 visits	\$278,791 (profit) \$5,552,148 revenue \$5,715,205 expenses  average revenue per visitor = \$20.86	Supported by Wellington City Council  (non-council revenue = 75%)

Year ending June 2021

## Revenue projections

An uplift in visitor numbers and spend per visitor is expected with implementation of the initiatives made possible by the employment of a BDO, and further by the construction of a new visitor centre on the private land block.

This analysis assumes a salary with oncosts of \$75,000 for the BDO and increased spending on the required strategic initiatives of \$50,000 each year after their employment. The 2025 projection would reflect the position after the BDO has been in place for two years.

Projections for the post-visitor centre construction would require further detailed development of a visitor experience and facility concept. Once this was developed a detailed business plan including a full financial and economic impact assessment should be prepared.

	Visitor numbers	Assumptions Stage/ revenue sources	Revenue/Expenses
<b>current</b>	12-16,000	Status quo	Income of \$178,913, and expenses of \$217,003 Deficit of-\$20,598 in 2021
<b>2025</b>	20,000 (projected)	BDO in place, some changes Return of International visitors Basic improvements (eg paid guiding, digital donations at RFR, and broader marketing)	Lift spend per visit to \$20, add membership initiatives Revenue \$400,000+ Expenses \$342,000 (existing + BDO + strategic projects)
<b>2030</b>	35,000 (projected)	New VC, higher numbers, more revenue streams	Increase spend per visit to \$25, revenue around \$875,000 pa

By implementing the actions within this strategy including the addition of a dedicated BDO position, the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre has the potential to drive immediate increases in the attractiveness of the site, increase visitation through the supply of focussed visitor facilities and services, and increased opportunities to spend through additional value-added experiences.

The BDO would drive the strategic planning for the future of the centre, commence discussions with potential commercial and other partners to improve efficiency of operations, and better promote the site to visitors and the community.









## APPENDIX A – EXISTING PRODUCTS

In terms of product offering, the experience available to most visitors includes visiting the Robert Findlay Reserve to view shorebirds in their natural habitat, and some educational opportunities courtesy of informative displays located within the PMSC itself. Other than asking for a voluntary donation, most of this existing experience is offered free of charge to the general public.

**Shorebird Centre:** Located just off East Coast Road, the PMSC offers visitors static displays focused on the shorebirds seen in the area and their global migratory routes, along with detailed information about New Zealand's shorebirds, their ecology, habitat, and conservation. There is also a lounge available for visitor use, with basic tea and coffee making facilities accessible for a small donation, along with some toilets (available free of charge, but with a voluntary donation suggested). The gift shop located within the PMSC offers a selection of shorebird-related gifts, books, and assorted paraphernalia. It has the most extensive onsite selection of natural history book titles anywhere in the country. This is frequently remarked upon by visitors.

**Accommodation:** The PMSC also offers basic accommodation on-site, with the choice of either self-contained units or bunk dormitories. There are two self-contained rooms which offer an en-suite and fully equipped kitchen, and three bunkrooms of varying capacity with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. In total there is accommodation for approximately 22 guests at any one time, though there are also fold-down settees available in the self-contained units if required. Nightly rates range from \$90 (member) to \$135 (non-member) for two people staying in the self-contained units, and \$20 (member) to \$35 (non-member) for the bunkrooms.

**Robert Findlay Reserve:** Located approximately 2km (30 mins walk) south of the PMSC, the Robert Findlay Reserve is the main shorebird viewing area available in the area. Infrastructure facilitating this experience begins with a public carpark located just off the road at the southern end of the reserve, with a public toilet also available on site. Alternatively, there is a walking track accessible from the PMSC which allows entry from the north through (DOC) conservation reserve. From either end, a combination of limestone/grass walking tracks and boardwalks provide access to three wooden viewing hides available for public use, spread within approximately 15 minutes' gentle walk of each other. The optimal times to view the shorebirds are two hours either side of high tide.

**Additional Services:** The PMSC provides some basic related services such as binocular/scope hire. Funds allowing, the Centre employs a shore guide over summer to interact with visitors at the hides, and other ad-hoc guided experiences of various forms. We. They also facilitate a selection of bird-related courses throughout the year covering a variety of areas including shorebird management, geology, botany, entomology, and printmaking. The PMSC lounge is also available for venue hire with basic facilities (tables, chairs, projector screen, tea/coffee) provided.

## APPENDIX B – DIFFIRENTIATION BETWEEN BOARD AND OPERATIONAL STAFF ROLES

The framework defines board and management activities that support effective governance. It helps to differentiate between the primary areas of board oversight and the areas that management is responsible for.



Primary areas of Board Oversight



Management Responsibilities

## APPENDIX C – EXISTING PRODUCTS

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## APPENDIX D – CASE STUDY NOTES

### ZEALANDIA

- Leading tourism attraction in Wellington
- A not-for-profit community-led organisation
- The Trust has a team of Guardians who safeguard the long-term vision of the Trust, two Patrons who have had a close involvement since its establishment, and seven trustees, chosen for their range and balance of skills and experience – including expertise in directorship, business, economic development and Māori economic development, finance, tourism, marketing, education, information technology, science, and conservation
- The strategic management team includes a Chief Executive, a General Manager Conservation and Restoration, a General Manager Corporate Services, and a General Manager Engagement
- Volunteers - 520
- From a record high in 2019/20, Zealandia’s visitor numbers reduced by 15% to 121,729 during the 2020/21 year. Revenue from visitors remained a substantial portion of total revenue - 40% of Zealandia’s revenue came from visitors, through admissions, tours, café, and retail sales.
- Strong local base - 67% of visitors while borders were closed
- Education visits - 12,000
- Members - 16,158
- Free entry period to increase membership and associated sales through shop, café etc.
- Cost of new visitor centre (now 10 years old) was \$16m (double the estimated amount)

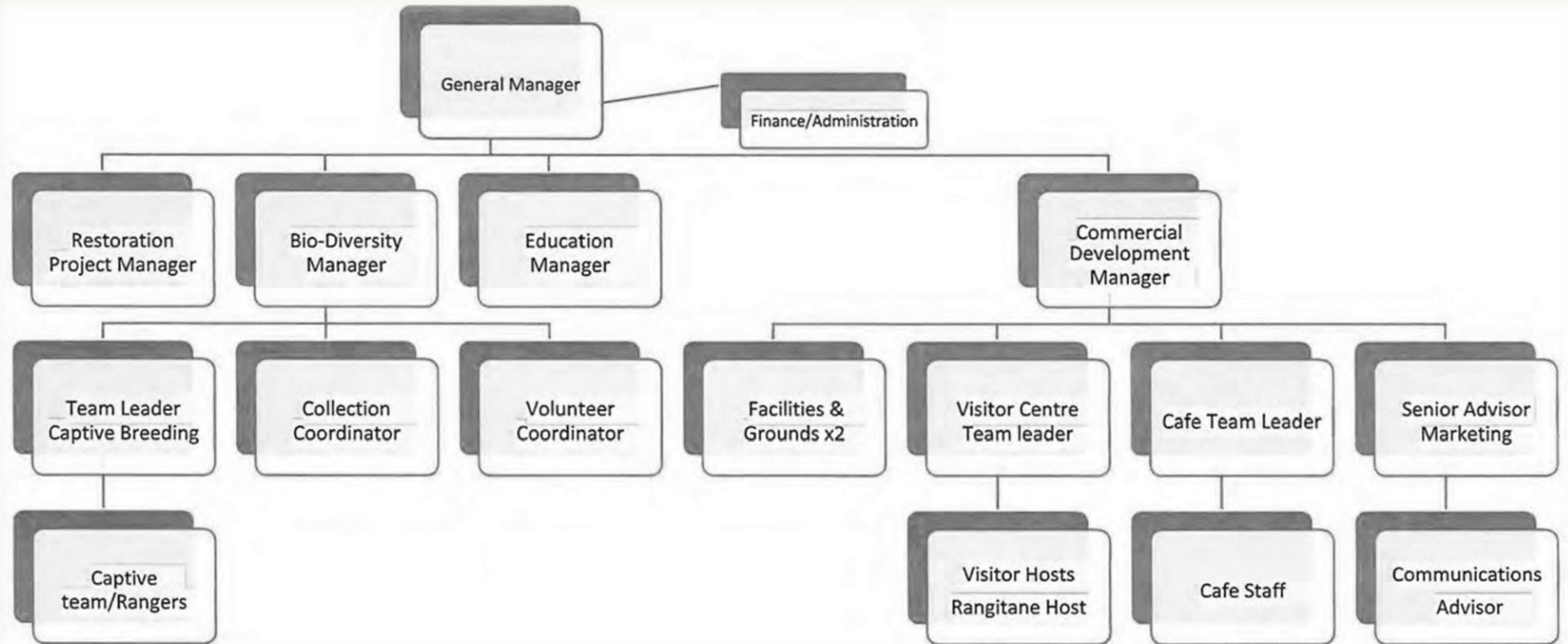
### PŪKAHA MT BRUCE

- The General Manager is responsible for the overall performance of the organisation. The General Manager is supported by a leadership team covering the specialised areas of Finance, Commercial (hospitality and tourism), Biodiversity, Education and Forest Restoration.
- Main sources of entity's cash and resources generated from admissions, retail sales, cafe sales, grants, donations, sponsorship, and fund-raising events.
- Reliance on Volunteers and Donated Goods or Services - Pūkaha is a community project, dependent on the generous support of volunteers from across the regions and abroad to carry out some of the essential tasks in the forest and in the visitor centre.
- Pūkaha has a visionary project to create an Environmental Education Centre to inform people about their natural world (est \$4m in 2019).
- Visitor numbers = 42,500. Locals rate.
- No council/govt operational funding, but councils and DOC provide grants and donations for restoration projects etc. Assets also donated by DOC.
- Last two years have run a financial deficit (but restoration projects have been achieved).

#### Entity Structure - Board Structure

Pūkaha Mount Bruce Board resolved and accepted to execute a new constitution in accordance with the Charitable Trusts Act 1957 which was signed 18 November 2019. The Board Trust constitution has been updated to allow for no less than five members and up to eight appointed members, including one person appointed by Rangitane O Wairarapa, one person appointed by the Department of Conservation and up to six members being appointed by the Board members. In addition, up to three co-opted members may be appointed for a specific purpose as determined by the Board. The Board elects its own Chairperson. The maximum tenure for the Chairperson has been updated for a term of one year and may be re-appointed for an indefinite number of consecutive terms.

## Entity Structure – Organisation Structure



## TIRITIRI MATANGI

### Entity Structure:

Tiritiri Matangi is a responsibility of DOC, but is co-managed with the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SOTM) - a non-profit conservation volunteer group founded in 1988 to further the aims of the Tiritiri Matangi conservation project. The Supporters work includes guiding, track maintenance, research, fundraising, and managing the Visitor Centre and shop. SOTM is now one of the largest conservation groups in New Zealand, with over 1500 memberships. SOTM's mission is to develop Tiritiri Matangi, in conjunction with DOC, iwi and other stakeholders, as a model of sustainability and management.

Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi is an incorporated society. Operations are managed by a subcommittee of the committee. The society employs staff to manage education, guiding and shop activities (less than 2 FTEs). Volunteers contribute over 60,000 hours of work. DOC employs two rangers.

Funds come from a mixture of earnings from the shop, subscriptions, donations, guiding fees, and grants.

The bunkhouse is the only accommodation on Tiritiri Matangi. It is a communal facility and has limited availability as it is primarily used by volunteers and students carrying out work on the island. \$40A, \$30C. Three rooms are for public use, with 15 bunk beds in total.

- Guided walks – booked with ferry \$10A, \$2.50C run by the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi. There are now some 200 volunteer guides. The fees for guiding, and income from the shop, contribute significantly to the island's funding.
- Ferry - \$82A, \$50C
- There is a visitor centre and shop near the lighthouse which is normally open 11am - 3pm from Wednesday to Sunday and where souvenirs and cold drinks can be purchased.

- Education programme includes resources for teachers and students of all ages
- Visitor numbers = 24,000 pre covid (12.5k during)
- Planning to build a \$5.5m field centre

## DOLOMITE POINT/PUNAKAIKI PANCAKE ROCKS

Recent visitor centre partnership model between DOC and iwi.

Dolomite Point Experience Centre at Punakaiki on the West Coast (home to the pancake rocks), which pre-Covid attracted 500,000 visitors a year, is undergoing a \$26 million redevelopment – the VC itself was planned at \$5million, funded by the Provincial Growth Fund (includes an exhibition which will tell the story of mana whenua and the geography of the area using light and sound displays). The unprecedented cost increases mean that a staged approach is now being undertaken.

The project includes space for a Department of Conservation (DOC) information centre, exhibition space connected to the Experience Centre, a café, a community meeting room and offices for Ngāti Waewae, a new car park, a short nature walk and lookout at the rear of the site, a highway crossing and a walking and cycling path to make Punakaiki safer and more accessible for visitors and burying of overhead power cables.

Once complete, the building will be gifted to Ngāti Waewae by the government.

**Other** Visitor Centre estimated costs:

## KAPITI TE URUHI BIOSECURITY AND VISITOR CENTRE

Estimated cost from \$4.5m to \$7.7m (May 2022)



## APPENDIX E – POTENTIAL MARKETS

- 1. Passers-by:** Visitors going past who are looking for a place to stop. This audience are likely to be either driving past the PMSC on a daytrip, as part of a small touring group (e.g., car clubs), have been staying in a motorhome at a nearby freedom camping spot, or have just started biking the Hauraki Rail Trail. They may have a general interest in nature but are typically just looking for a place for a quick stop (rest/bathroom break/coffee/food etc). Though the most obvious of this segment would be those travelling directly past the PMSC, this could also extend to those travelling on SH2 – a main entrance point and arterial link from Auckland to the Coromandel.
- 2. Holiday Makers:** Visitors staying somewhere on the Shorebird Coast looking for something to do for a morning or afternoon. They are likely to be either ‘silver surfers’ (retired or semi-retired in a motorhome or local accommodation provider), or parents/grandparents with young children staying at the Miranda Holiday Park. They may have a general interest in nature, but are more likely interested in doing some form of activity close to where they are staying.
- 3. Local + Wider Community:** Live in the local area and want to increase their involvement with the PMSC either through regular visits, volunteering, or participating in events. Includes both the local and wider (Hauraki/Thames) community looking for something to recommend to/take visiting friends and relatives.
- 4. Nature Lovers:** Visiting the area partly due to the shorebird watching opportunities available. They have a genuine interest in nature and birds and enjoy learning more about them and meeting other enthusiasts. This group would happily spend several hours exploring the PMSC and may in fact visit multiple times over the course of their few days spent in the area.
- 5. Birdwatchers/Twitchers:** Travelled to the area specifically to visit the PMSC and experience the shorebirds and their natural habitat. They will likely spend several days on the Shorebird Coast and be largely focused on optimising this experience. Most likely to stay at the PMSC accommodation.
- 6. Education Groups:** Intermediate, high school or tertiary education providers within an hour’s drive of the PMSC interested in a day trip teaching students about nature/conservation, history, and/or geography.
- 7. Group Tours:** Hosted groups of 10 – 50 passengers, they may be from a retirement village or other senior-focused organisation (e.g., Lions or U3A) who are visiting on a daytrip from Auckland/Hamilton, or on a coach trip passing through the area as part of a larger itinerary within the Coromandel.
- 8. Corporate Groups:** Small corporate groups looking for somewhere to host an overnight break-out team session or mini-conference.

**TRC** TOURISM  
RECREATION  
CONSERVATION

