

Hon Eugenie Sage

Minister of Conservation

Minister for Land Information

Associate Minister for the Environment

Minitā mō Te Papa Atawhai

Minita mō Toitū Te Whenua

Minita Tuarua mō Te Taiao



11 MAY 2013

Christine McCarthy and Daryl Cockburn
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Dear Ms McCarthy and Mr Cockburn

Thank you for your letter of 2 March, outlining some issues for the conservation portfolio. I understand that you have also written to a number of other Ministers about the matter.

The Department of Conservation's primary interest in preserving and protecting historic heritage is to manage historic resources on the lands that it administers. The department follows resource management processes regarding heritage matters, while respecting the lead role of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

I will address specific points you raised below.

(a) Urban natural heritage initiatives

I note the Centre's interest and involvement in improving the quality of urban development and agree it is important to recognise the role of green corridors as cities become increasingly built out. The collaborative group that is working on a National Policy Statement (NPS) for indigenous biodiversity under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is aware of their importance, including riparian margins and ecological corridors.

(b) Heritage trees

I understand RMA reform is on the agenda for the Minister for the Environment but will not be considered until later in the year.

In the meantime, the department is working with the Ministry for Primary Industries and other government agencies to ensure that the one billion trees project includes a significant proportion of indigenous trees. I would expect planting areas will include those within the jurisdiction of urban and unitary councils.

(c) Energy-use calculations to be included in applications for building and resource consents

I believe this matter requires some collaborative thinking, including addressing both mitigating for and adapting to climate change and protecting biodiversity values. The department's main role in this regard is in improving the design of structures it builds on public conservation lands, such as tramping huts. I am advised that there have been significant improvements in the insulation of new tramping huts located in alpine and sub-alpine locations on the public conservation estate.

(d) National Policy Statement on historic heritage

The Minister for the Environment, supported by the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, has the mandate to prepare the NPS on historic heritage. The NPS aims to strengthen and further support existing mechanisms administered by the Government's heritage agencies, the department, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Heritage New Zealand.

The department protects a significant portfolio of historic and cultural heritage, including more than 600 actively managed sites, and protects from harm a further 13,000 archaeological and historic sites. These places are protected in accordance with functions and responsibilities under the Conservation, Reserves and National Parks acts.

Heritage New Zealand would typically advocate for protecting the heritage of areas not managed by the department.

(e) + (f) Normalise the use of heritage orders

As you identify, heritage protection orders are an RMA instrument that may be applied in circumstances where there is no statutory protection for heritage. It is not necessary to apply heritage orders to heritage areas that the department manages as these areas already enjoy statutory protection under the Conservation, Reserves and National Parks acts.

The Minister for the Environment, may be in a position to provide an opinion on the success or otherwise of heritage orders and to consider your views on how these might be better administered under the RMA.

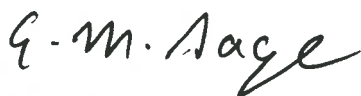
(g) Research on economic, sustainability, heritage, place making and cultural benefits of adaptive re-use of historic heritage resources

The connection of cultural and historic heritage to identity, community and place making is set in key government heritage initiatives, such as Landmarks Whenua Tohunga (Landmarks), in which the department is engaged. A key objective of the Landmarks programme is to profile our important heritage more effectively and to engage New Zealanders in that history in order to grow understanding, value and support. This programme has been rolled out in the Northland and Otago regions and will continue in other regions over coming years. For further information visit: www.landmarks.nz

A key component of managing heritage buildings is ensuring the buildings are safe for people to live and work in, and visit. Government is funding earthquake strengthening and will continue to promote re-use of historic buildings, for example, the recent earthquake strengthening of the Hakatere Station cottage in the Hakatere Conservation Park, Ashburton Gorge. The department has also applied the concept of adaptive re-use to buildings it administers, for example, the Old Government Buildings, Wellington (recently transferred to Heritage New Zealand), the Dominion Observatory, Wellington, and the Alexandra heritage post office.

I would like to express my thanks for the work Arch Centre does to improve our urban environments. Thank you also for your kind words on my appointment as Minister of Conservation.

Yours sincerely



Hon. Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation