

Recommendation from Taharoa Domain Campground Operations - Registration of Expressions of Interest

Meeting: Kaipara District Council
Date of meeting: 29 May 2024
Reporting officer: Hayley Worthington, GM Customer Experience

Purpose | Ngā whāinga

To consider the recommendations for the Strategic Review into Kaipara Campgrounds, endorsement from the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee, and to request staff to gauge interest in the operations of the campgrounds from the market through a Registered Expressions of Interest process.

Executive summary | Whakarāpopototanga

The Strategic Review into Kaipara Campgrounds (**Attachment A**) results and recommendations were shared with Kaipara District Council at the Council Briefing 7th February 2024.

The recommendation for the Taharoa Domain campgrounds (Pine Beach and Promenade Point) provides Council the option to withdraw from the operations. Taharoa Domain campgrounds remain the only campground operated by Kaipara District Council and supported by Kaipara rate payers.

Staff sought endorsement /recommendation for a future approach from the reconvened Taharoa Domain Governance Committee (TDGC) meeting 23rd April 2024, being that a Registration of Expressions of Interest (REOI) is completed for the operations of the campgrounds. The Committee agreed to follow the proposed recommendation which is confirmed in the TDGC 23rd April Meeting Minutes (**Attachment B**).

Staff now request Elected Members consider the recommendations within the Strategic Review into Kaipara Campgrounds and that of the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee. With Council approval staff will gauge interest in the operations of the campgrounds from the market through an REOI.

Recommendation | Ngā tūtohunga

That the Kaipara District Council:

- a) Notes the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee endorsement and recommendation to begin a Registration of Expressions of Interest (REOI) for the operations of the Taharoa Domain campgrounds to gauge interest from the market.
- b) Requests the Chief Executive operate a Registration of Expressions of Interest (REOI) process for the operations of the Pine Beach and Promenade Point campgrounds.

Context | Horopaki

There is currently no strategic approach to Council's involvement in the provision of camping opportunities across the district, including an understanding of the reasons why the Council provides for this activity, what outcomes it is seeking and the most effective management structures and operating models to achieve these.

Kaipara District Council provides a large and diverse portfolio of campgrounds. These range from large high revenue operations generating iconic campgrounds such as those at Kai Iwi Lakes and Mangawhai, through to smaller local reserve campgrounds often adjacent to community

halls such as those at Pahi, Tinopai, Kellys Bay and Pouto. Kaipara campgrounds have been valued by generations of campers over many years, as well as contributing positively to the wider opportunities available for visitors to Northland.

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Discussion | Ngā kōrerorero

The Strategic Review into Kaipara Campgrounds report provides a robust overview of Kaipara campgrounds, their operating and management models, the condition of the campgrounds and assets, and recommended actions for KDC to consider.

The recommendation for Taharoa Domain Campgrounds - Pine Beach and Promenade Point, is for KDC to seek alternative operations models through a registration of expressions of interest.

Continued direct 'in house' operation by Council would remain possible if no other suitable options emerged.

Current Operation Model

- Council have operated the Pine Beach and Promenade Point Campgrounds since 2019.
- Council maintain and upkeep the wider Domain (Kai Iwi, Waikare, planting and vegetation maintenance, toilets etc)

Over previous seasons, the Taharoa Domain team have made many improvements to enable a consistent high level of service, as well as to reduce risk to KDC. Administration of the campground is a 365-day job and KDC currently does not provide a dedicated resource to continue with the level of service, therefore much of the administration is carried out by the KDC Contact Centre on top of existing workload.

It is currently difficult for KDC to recruit for the domain due to the expectations of a 7-day roster across summer, and also the cost of transport to transfer staff to and from the domain (Council provides pool vehicles to support the provision of staff on the domain).

The current model strengthens and supports KDC's operational relationship with iwi, and iwi's access and input into the wider Taharoa Domain.

Options

Option 1: KDC operate an Registration of Expressions of Interest (REOI) process for the operations of the campgrounds to gauge interest from the market, with the planned direction of the campground to be operated by an external provider.

This is the recommended option.

Option 2: Status quo. KDC operates and staffs the Pine Beach and Promenade Point campgrounds and continues to maintain the wider Taharoa Domain Reserve.

Policy and planning implications

If the Council wants to lease the campground land to another party, because it is Recreation Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977 (Act), this will need to be approved by the Minister under section 53(1)(a) of the Act, and is subject to specific legal requirements; and

There could also be requirements to give public notice and hear submissions from the public under sections 119 and 120 of the Act.

Kaipara District Council is required to review and consult with the community on the Taharoa Domain Reserve Management Plan (RMP) every ten years. The current RMP was approved in 2016, therefore KDC are planning to review and consult in FY 24/25 for approval in FY 25/26.

Financial implications

The operations and maintenance of the wider Domain (Kai Iwi, Waikare, walking tracks, planting etc) will remain an ongoing cost for KDC.

The domain is funded by campground revenue and is managed and maintained by KDC as per the Taharoa Domain Reserve Management Plan. Current cost to ratepayer is \$320k per annum, although this is often balanced by revenue as below.

The campgrounds are currently partially funded by General Rates. If management is retained by KDC there is an approximate revenue of \$245k which is currently applied to the Domain.

A full breakdown of Financials is provided in **Attachment C**.

Risks and mitigations

KDC would have no say about the campground operations - customer experience, Health & Safety, or fees and charges.

As current ablution block roadside above Promenade Point is deemed a public toilet, there would be no ablution facilities available for the Promenade Point campground.

Changes will need to be made to separate the current security system, potentially including the security gates as the system including cameras and monitoring is managed Domain wide.

Council will be required to continue to maintain the wider reserve via General Rates. Responsibility for the Domain could be considered in the Lease/License terms and conditions.

Additional coordination efforts will be required to maintain relationships – Department of Conservation, Northland Regional Council, KDC, and Iwi all play roles within the domain, which KDC currently coordinates and manages through its governance model and existing roles within the KDC staff structure.

Impacts on Māori

KDC's relationship with Te Iwi o Te Roroa at the Taharoa Domain has been in place and ongoing since 2002. We have been working with Te Roroa for three seasons now in an ambassador (kaitiaki) role.

Via contract for service agreements, Te Roroa have successfully supported the Taharoa Domain team with:

- Ambassador services at Lake Waikare during the peak season
- Security presence across the domain during New Years and Crate Day weekend (huge improvement)
- Clean, Check, Dry, Bio-security operation in partnership with Northland Regional Council.

The Taharoa Domain team and Te Roroa meet monthly to discuss operations and to ensure we are consistently providing a high level of service. KDC and Te Roroa will need to ensure any new agreements in place allow for input and transparency.

The Strategic Review into Kaipara Campgrounds has been socialised through the Mana Whenua Quarterly Hui and the Taharoa Domain Governance Committee to ensure transparency and awareness of process and direction.

Significance and engagement | Hirahira me ngā whakapāpā

The decisions or matters of this report are considered to have a low degree of significance in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy. No feedback is required, and the public will be informed of Council's decision via the agenda and minutes publication of this meeting, on the website and through other channels if appropriate.

Next steps | E whaiake nei

REOI process to begin:

1. Staff create REOI documentation which is publicly released through all media channels alongside an invitation to register interest in operation of campgrounds – Registrations are open for approximately six weeks.
2. Staff meet with REOI Participants for briefing, site visit and clarification of any questions (if requested), clarify questions and feedback of applicants.
3. Evaluation of candidates by staff. Preferred supplier identified.
4. REOI outcome (Evaluation process and preferred supplier) presented to Taharoa Domain Governance Committee for recommendation and endorsement (July 24)
5. REOI outcome (Evaluation process and preferred supplier) presented to Kaipara District Council for feedback and approval. (July/August 24)
6. REOI participants advised of outcome and decision.
7. Contractual and operational arrangements begin.

Attachments | Ngā tapiritanga

	Title
A	A strategic review of camping within Kaipara District
B	Taharoa Domain Governance Committee 23 April 2024 Meeting Minutes
C	Taharoa Domain and Campground Financials