

# Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Monitoring Report

Volume 1: Summary of Findings

June 2013

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**Waitākere Ranges  
Local Board**   
Auckland Council

Ko Hikurangi te maunga  
Ko Waitākere te awa.  
Ko Te Au o te Whenua te tangata.  
Ko Te Kawerau-a-Maki te iwi.

Korōria ki te Atua  
Maungārongo ki te whenua  
Whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa

I te tuatahi ka mihi ki a Kingi Tūheitia, ki tōna hoa rangatira, a  
Atawhai me tā rāua whānau e noho mai nei i runga i te ahurewa o  
ōna mātua tūpuna, pai marire.

Ki ngā mate, koutou kua whetūrangitia, kua mene ki te pō – haere,  
haere, haere.

Mai i Te Mānukanuka o Hoturoa ki nga wai whakapapa pounamu  
o te Waitematā, he reo mihi tenei kia koutou, nga Mana Whenua  
o tenei takiwa, Ngati Whatua me Te Kawerau a Maki. Ko koutou  
e whakaruruhau nei i te Tāone Nui o Tāmaki Makaurau – Ko te Te  
Wao-nui-a-Tiriwa - tu te Ao, tu te Po - tu rangatira mai.

E kore e taea e te kupu te whakapuaki i te mahana o te rā, te mākuku  
o te ua, me te maretanga o te hau. Mā te kite, mā te rongu, mā te  
whakaaro ka tau te kupu.

“Ahakaoa he iti, he pounamu.”

He mihi poto engari he whakaaro nui.  
Noho ora mai i raro i ngā manaakitanga o te Runga Rawa.

Aroha nui

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## Mayor's foreword

Auckland has a stunning and unique setting, cradled between the sea and the backdrop of the Waitākere Ranges.

The ranges are a taonga for not just Aucklanders and visitors to our region, but all New Zealand. People have long valued the Waitākeres, with evidence of human history in the area dating back about 1000 years.

One of the largest areas of coastal and lowland forest remaining in the region, the ranges have national ecological significance, supporting 540 species of indigenous plants, several thousand insect species, more than 100 snail species, 71 bird species, six lizard and two skink species, the long-tailed bat and Hochstetter's frog. Sadly, that also translates to of 93 nationally threatened species, 148 regionally threatened plant species, and the presence of Kauri Dieback disease.

The Waitākere Ranges are also unique for the pressures they face as a major natural and cultural heritage area close to an expanding metropolitan centre, and as an area where people live, work and play.

The area includes public and private land, busy townships like Titirangi and coastal villages like Piha and Huia. It covers foothills, the deep, calm green of native bush and our wonderful wild West Coast.

In 2008, the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 was put in place in recognition of the national, regional and local significance of the ranges, and to promote the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations.

Five years on we are asking ourselves if the objectives of the Act are being met and how human activity and the actions of and decisions of Auckland Council, its council-controlled organisations and their predecessors are affecting the area.

This is the first five-yearly monitoring report, commissioned by the Waitākere Ranges Local Board, which seeks to answer those questions.

Through this report, the local board and the wider council group welcome, recognise and respect the committed sense of stewardship shared by many who live and work in the area, local iwi and the numerous conservation and advocacy groups, some which have been champions for the Waitākere Ranges for decades.

We all recognise the treasure that embraces the western reaches of Auckland, and we are committed to working together to protect and sustain this wonderful place for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Len Brown'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Len Brown  
Mayor of Auckland

# Waitākere Ranges Local Board Chairperson's Message



## Waitākere Ranges Heritage Act – Five-Year Monitoring Report

Five years ago on 8 April 2008 Parliament voted to pass the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Bill into legislation. Six days later the Governor-General gave the Royal assent and it became law.

For many people, not just residents of Waitākere City, but right across New Zealand this was a very emotional time, the culmination of many, many years of hard work, determination and principled debate. Now, five years later, the Waitākere Ranges Local Board has signed off the first Monitoring Report, which is required by the Act.

The questions posed are: Have the actions of the people living in the Heritage Area, the actions of Waitākere City Council and Auckland Council, council controlled organisations such as Watercare and the various members of the public who have visited the heritage area been detrimental to those values that the Act sought to protect? Are the ranges as unique and spiritual, dark and quiet as they ever were? Are we looking after our special place, our taonga, for our children and grandchildren? What more can we do?

The Waitākere Ranges Local Board commissioned this first report, realising that there were few established benchmarks, and that this first report would set benchmarks for the future.

We were delighted to find that the landscape assessments commissioned by Waitākere City Council could be followed up by the same practitioner and that a number of council officers and former council officers who had worked

to prepare the Bill were available to work on preparation of the first five-year monitoring report. The continuity of knowledge and expertise has given us much confidence that the comments and conclusions in the report have real integrity.

In signing off the report and sending it to the various forums and committees of Auckland Council, the Waitākere Ranges Local Board expresses its satisfaction with the contents of the report. It recommends the monitoring report to Auckland Council and to our community. The local board expects that in five years time the next report will show that, despite the ravages of kauri dieback disease and the demands of an expanding Auckland, the integrity of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area will have been protected and respected. The taonga will remain intact as the heart and lungs and spiritual backdrop for the Aucklanders of the future.

Kia ora

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Denise A. Yates". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Denise Yates  
Chairperson  
Waitākere Ranges Local Board

# Tangata Whenua

## Te Kawerau ā Maki

Te Kawerau ā Maki are the tangata whenua (people of the land) of Waitākere, who hold customary authority or mana whenua within West Auckland. The Kawerau ā Maki people are not a hapū of any other tribe, nor have they been subsumed by any other tribe. Te Kawerau ā Maki maintain a separate identity, mana, tikanga, and rights to the lands, forests, kai moana, and taonga in the Waitākere area.

Te Kawerau ā Maki has existed as a distinct tribal entity since the early 1600s when the ancestor Maki and his brother Mataahu and their people conquered and settled 'Te Ipu Kura ā Maki' (the Tāmaki Isthmus) and the wider area. Through ancestral links, and intermarriage with those earlier peoples occupying the Auckland area, Te Kawerau ā Maki have direct ancestral connections to all of the preceding tribal groups who occupied the area since human occupation began over 800 years ago.

The Waitākere region, and hence the heritage area, takes its name from a very significant rock feature located in the small bay just north of Ihumoana Island, Te Henga. It is so named because of the seas that sweep relentlessly over it. From this rock came the general name for the Te Kawerau ā Maki settlement in the lower Waitākere river valley, and one of the names for the river itself. To Te Kawerau ā Maki, the traditional name for the wider West Auckland area is Hikurangi, while the name for the huge forest that once covered the area is Te Wao nui ā Tiriwa – the great forest of Tiriwa.

Te Kawerau ā Maki ancestral associations with West Auckland are expressed in many different ways including whakapapa or genealogy, pūrākau or traditions, waiata or songs, and tohu or place-names and landmarks that cover all parts of the

land and surrounding seas. Te Kawerau mana whenua in West Auckland is also symbolised by the many carved pou that have been erected throughout the region from Whatipu in the south to Te Awa Kotuku (Cascade Kauri Park) in the north. The many peaks extending down the Waitākere Ranges from Muriwai to the Manukau Harbour entrance became known as 'Nga Rau Pou ā Maki', or 'the many posts of Maki' (Te Kawerau ā Maki, 2013).

## Ngāti Whātua

Ngāti Whātua is an Auckland, Kaipara and Northland-based iwi with close ancestral ties to Te Kawerau ā Maki. The tribe has a relationship as mana whenua with Auckland Council, and its people continue to maintain their traditions, work in and contribute to all facets of their city. Ngāti Whātua have made use of the resources of, and resided in, the Waitākere Ranges Heritage area for about 400 years, although ancestral connections go back beyond that. Three particular episodes have been noted in a recent account (Paterson, 2009).

During the period of intense warfare in the late 1600s a punitive expedition by Ngāti Whātua down the west coast against Kawerau, known as Te Raupatu Tīhore (the 'Stripping Conquest') led to the seizure by the rangitira Kāwharu's taua of Waitākere pā at Ihumoana (Te Henga), Anawhata, Whakāri (Lion Rock) and Paratutai (at Whatipu).

In the mid 1700s conflict between Kiwi Tāmaki (ariki of the Waiohau confederation of Tāmaki) and Te Tāoū o Ngāti Whātua ranged across the wider region. The Titirangi area was a focal point and a major battle took place in the area between Paruroa (Big Muddy Creek) and what is now Scenic Drive, at which Ngāti Whātua were victorious.



Subsequently, in the early 1800s Ngāti Whātua from Kaipara were in intermittent conflict with their northern neighbours, Ngāpuhi, and took refuge at times in the Waitākere Ranges. During this “musket wars” era, Apihai Te Kawau (Ngāti Whātua rangatira in Tāmaki) and his followers moved to Karangahape (named for a prominent tohunga of the Tainui waka)/Cornwallis in 1835, built a fortified pā and remained there until 1838.

Ngāti Whātua continues to make use of their traditional places and resources throughout the Auckland area today.

# Part 1: Introduction

## Background

The Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area (heritage area) is unique in New Zealand both for its natural and cultural features and the pressures for change that it faces. This is due to its location close to the metropolitan heart of New Zealand's largest city. The Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (the Act) was put in place to recognise the area's national, regional and local significance and to promote the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations.

This is the first five-yearly monitoring report for the heritage area. It provides a summary of the current state of the area's heritage features and progress towards achieving the objectives of the Act. It also assesses whether the information systems currently in place to monitor such changes are adequate for their purpose.

The monitoring report is in two volumes. This volume provides a concise overview of the findings, while Volume 2 provides more detailed background, results and discussion and a fuller explanation of the monitoring methods. Volume 2 is based on a series of specialist technical reports, which are referenced at the end of that volume.

Based on these assessments, a series of key messages and matters for consideration are presented to Auckland Council as the primary agency responsible for implementing the Act and monitoring progress towards achieving its objectives.

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## Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008

### In summary, the Act:

- establishes the heritage area – covering 27,720 hectares of public and private land which includes the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park (regional park), urban areas of Titirangi and Laingholm, the foothills and coastal villages
  - identifies the heritage features of the area and promotes their protection, restoration and enhancement through a series of objectives
  - protects the heritage area from the adverse effects of urban sprawl
  - promotes this protection through the Resource Management Act (RMA) and Local Government Act, as well as influencing decision-making under a number of other relevant pieces of legislation
  - requires any council decisions, documents, policies and regulations or resource consent applications affecting the heritage area to be considered against the Act's objectives
  - provides long term certainty and manages cumulative adverse effects
  - recognises that people live and work in the area, and the need to enable them to provide for their wellbeing.
-

## Summary of heritage features identified in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act

<p><b>Natural Values</b></p> <p>Indigenous ecosystems. Habitats. Native vegetation.</p>	<p><b>Community</b></p> <p>Social, economic, cultural &amp; environmental wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Cultural heritage</b></p>
<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <p>Natural Scenic beauty. Dramatic natural landforms. Rural character of the foothills. Visual backdrop to Auckland.</p>	<p><b>WRHA Act- Heritage Features &amp; Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Human Environment</b></p> <p>Identity &amp; character of coastal villages. Distinctive local communities. Subservience of built environment to the natural &amp; rural landscape. Quietness and darkness.</p>
<p><b>Water</b></p> <p>Streams. Coastal areas. Public water supply catchment.</p>	<p><b>Tangata whenua</b></p> <p>relationships with the land. Exercise of Kaitiakitanga/ stewardship.</p>	<p><b>Parkland and Recreation</b></p> <p>Waitākere Ranges Regional Park. Opportunities for wilderness experiences, recreation and relaxation.</p>

Figure 1: Summary of heritage features identified in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act



Figure 2



## Planning and management context

The Act intersects with a wide range of other legislation, in particular the Resource Management Act, the Local Government Act and the Reserves Act. The range of strategies, plans and decision-making processes that manage the resources of the heritage area all need to assist in implementing the purposes and objectives of the Act. These include:

- the Auckland Plan
- the Auckland Council Regional Policy Statement, Regional Plan and District Plan (Waitākere Section)
- the Regional Parks Management Plan 2010
- designations for the regional park and Waitākere water supply dams and catchments
- local area plans (LAPs) prepared under the Act
- the future Auckland Council Unitary Plan.



## The role of community stewardship

A strong and positive force for change is provided by the numerous individuals and volunteer groups, both local and from the wider Auckland region, who are actively working to protect and enhance indigenous ecosystems in the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area and to raise public awareness of their importance. These include the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society, the Royal Forest and Bird's 'Ark in the Park' project in the Cascades, Friends of Arataki, Piha Coast Care, the Lone Kauri Forest Restoration Group, the La Trobe Restoration Group, the Waitākere River Care Group, the 26 Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups created since 2008, and many others. Some of these groups have been active for many years, for example the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society was formed in 1973 and recently celebrated 40 years of conservation work in the Waitākere Ranges.

## Approach taken to monitoring

Monitoring is essential for informed and evidence-based decision making, particularly where the subject matter is complex and the outcomes from decisions are subject to uncertainty. It should also take place against a background of clearly stated objectives so that progress can be accurately assessed against relevant indicators or descriptors.

Indicators are a way of presenting and managing complex information in a simple and clear manner. These can form the basis for future action and can be readily communicated, providing a common and transparent basis for measurement. Quantitatively measurable indicators have been used throughout this report, supplemented by qualitative assessment where either this is more appropriate or adequate 'hard' data was not available.

## Part 2: Topic themes – summary of findings

The Act's heritage features and objectives have been grouped into the following themes according to their dominant elements.

- Landscape
- Development and consenting activity
- Ecosystems and ecosystem services
- Cultural and built heritage
- Recreation and visitor management
- People and communities

A full list of the heritage features and the objectives of the Act is provided in Volume 2, Appendix 1.

### 2.1 Landscape

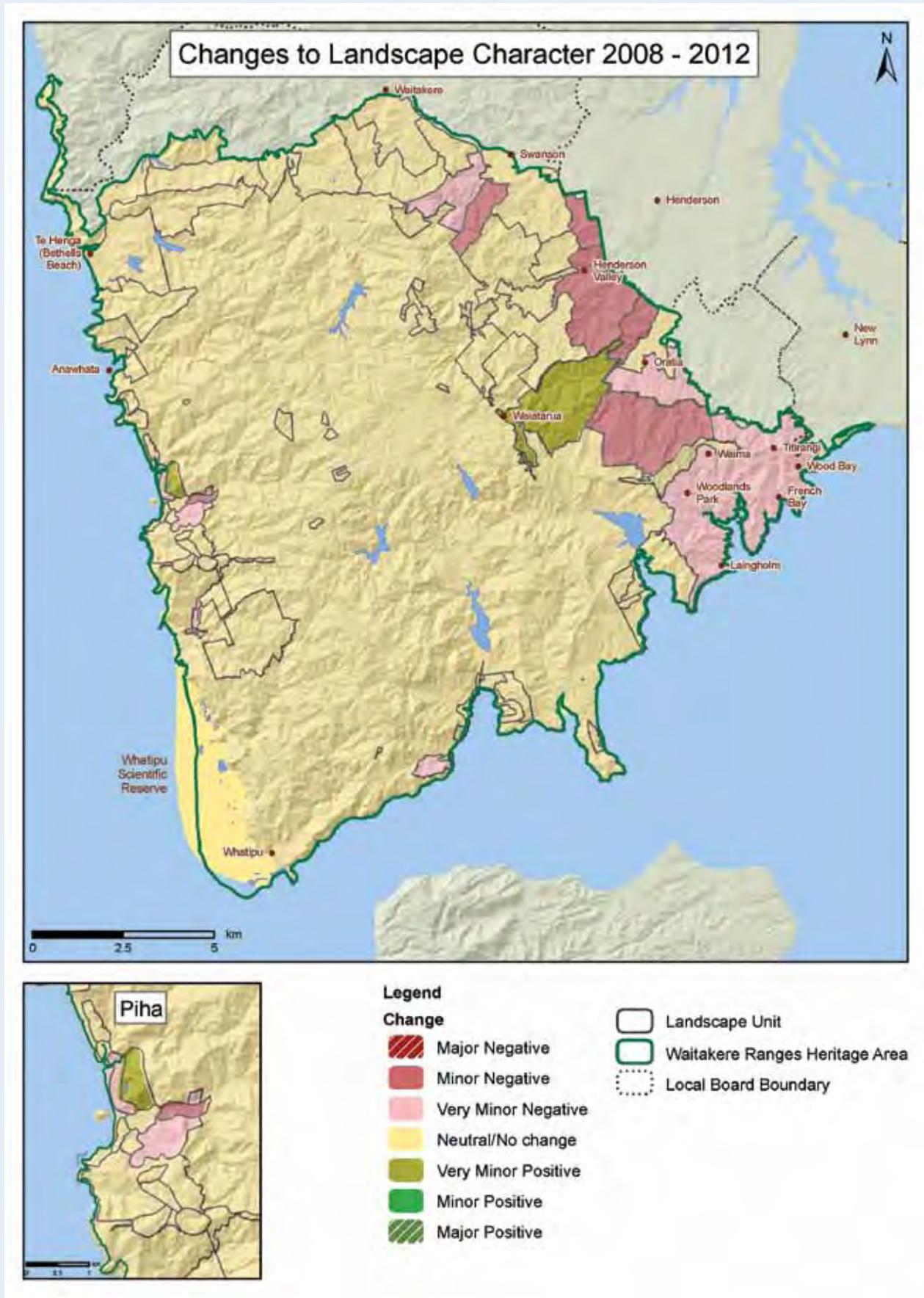
Landscape character and quality is an essential element for eight of the Act's heritage features, along with four of its objectives. Important features that contribute to the national significance of the heritage area are its natural landforms and landscapes, natural coastal character, the visual backdrop it provides to urban Auckland, along with its quietness and darkness. The built environment is to remain subservient to natural and rural landscape elements. Where development has occurred it is to be reflected in individual, contained and distinct coastal villages, low-density bush clad urban areas such as Titirangi, and the rural foothills with its pattern of farmland, cultivations and bush settings.

Changes to the landscape character of the heritage area have been assessed, based on comparisons of landscape assessments done in 2004 to 2008 and again in late 2012 and early 2013. The findings are based on field assessments of landscape units (see volume II for further details). These provide an evaluation of the cumulative effects of development and a baseline for future monitoring.

### Key findings

- The overall effect of development on the heritage area's landscape quality was either neutral or positive across 59 of the 73 landscape units assessed, and minor or negative across the remainder, with the greatest change occurring in the foothills (Figure 3). There were no significant changes to any of the individual landscape units.
- Local adverse effects on landscape character have been identified and attributed in particular to either unsympathetic siting and design of new dwellings, or to infrastructure works by the council and Auckland Transport within the road corridor. The assessment has also identified that there is sometimes limited ability to manage the adverse effects of development that is permitted without requiring a resource consent.
- The Act's objectives for retaining a rural landscape character may be adversely affected in the long term by cumulative loss of shelter belts, screening vegetation and 'traditional' land uses such as orcharding and viticulture in the foothills.
- The future vulnerability of both coastal and foothills landscapes need to be examined further to determine whether there is any necessity to revise the district plan's approach to ensure that it is successful in protecting both indigenous vegetation and village character in the coastal communities and the rural character of the foothills.
- The Waitākere Ranges Foothills Design Guidelines should be more widely used in the site development and consenting process.

Figure 3





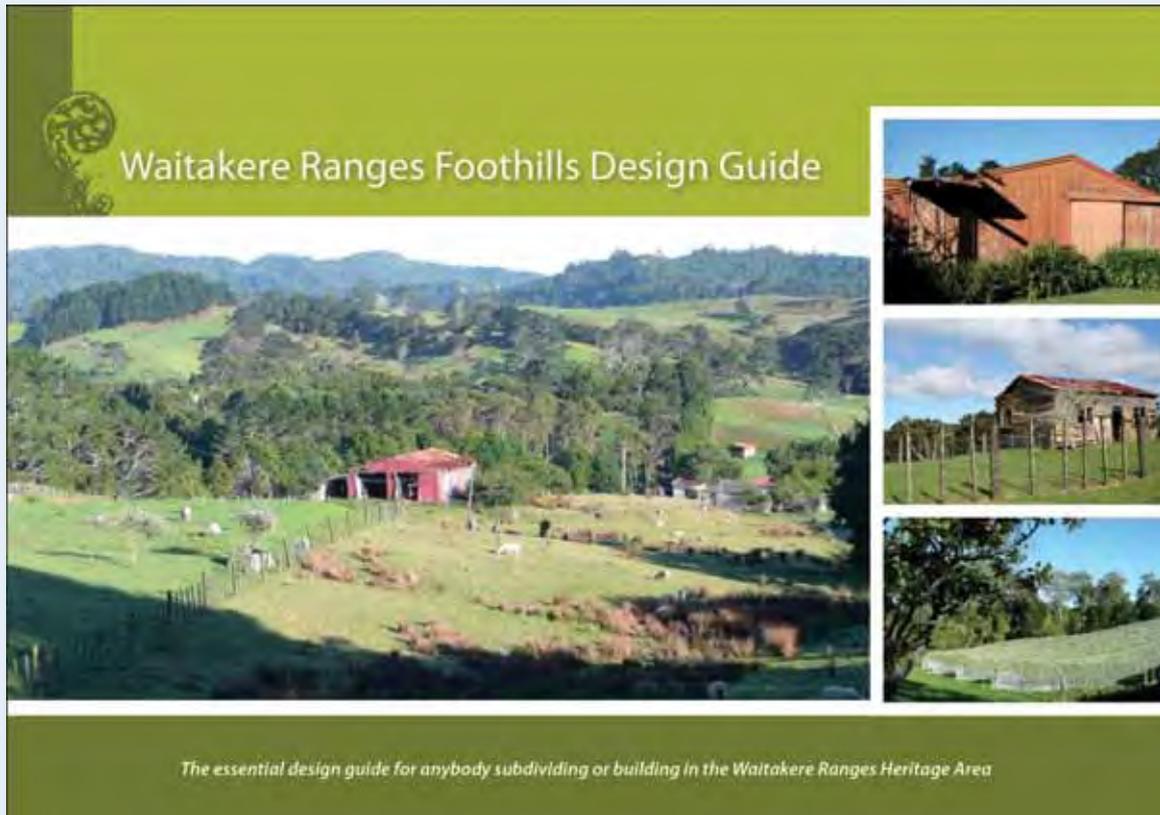
Photographs of Piha in 2006 (left) and 2012 (right) showing slow rate of change. Note that vegetation has continued to grow and some areas of development have become more recessive over time.

### Progress in achieving the objectives of the Act

- While the purpose and objectives of the Act are generally being met, there is some long-held concern that over time cumulative adverse effects may result from both permitted and consented development. This may be an unforeseen consequence of existing rules in the district plan. This is a matter that requires ongoing consideration through the resource consent process and the preparation of the Unitary Plan, along with raising community awareness of techniques that can be employed to reduce these adverse effects.

### Strategic issues for consideration

- Local area plans (LAPs) can be an effective long-term tool for the management of adverse effects, particularly cumulative effects on landscape character and amenity. However, the most recently produced LAPs have only just become operative so it is too early to evaluate their success. Further, to be effective, this process is dependent on the preparation of LAPs across the heritage area, requiring a sustained programme of LAP development. With the Unitary Plan, the existing and future LAPs will need to be given specific recognition or else they will have no effect on decisions made on resource consent applications.
- There is room for improvement in the siting, scale and design of new subdivisions, development and infrastructure. This can be addressed through the council and community consideration of the Unitary Plan, in terms of whether there is a better way to mitigate potential adverse effects from development, and what rule-based thresholds will provide an appropriate level of intervention. There may also be a need to consider non-regulatory methods.
- The wider use of the Waitākere Ranges Foothills Design Guideline can assist landowners, their professionals and the council in considering better ways to provide for anticipated development within the heritage area, while managing its effects.



- Recent infrastructure projects have introduced an urban-style road corridor design in some locations. More awareness is required by the council and Auckland Transport of the effects of infrastructure on these landscape values. This may warrant reconsideration of the infrastructure design specifications used in the heritage area.
- The preparation of the Unitary Plan will need to consider whether the above two matters also warrant a reconsideration of the existing rules and thresholds of the District Plan.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- More accurate methods are required to assess the extent of ongoing vegetation removal.
- Methods for evaluating changes in rural activities and their effects, both positive and negative, on rural character should be developed.
- The potential to develop indicators for landscape objectives which are difficult to measure (for example quietness and darkness) should be explored.

## 2.2 Development and consent activity

This section identifies the extent of development and consent activity in the heritage area. It provides details of building and resource consents, and compares information for the periods before and after the Act came into effect.

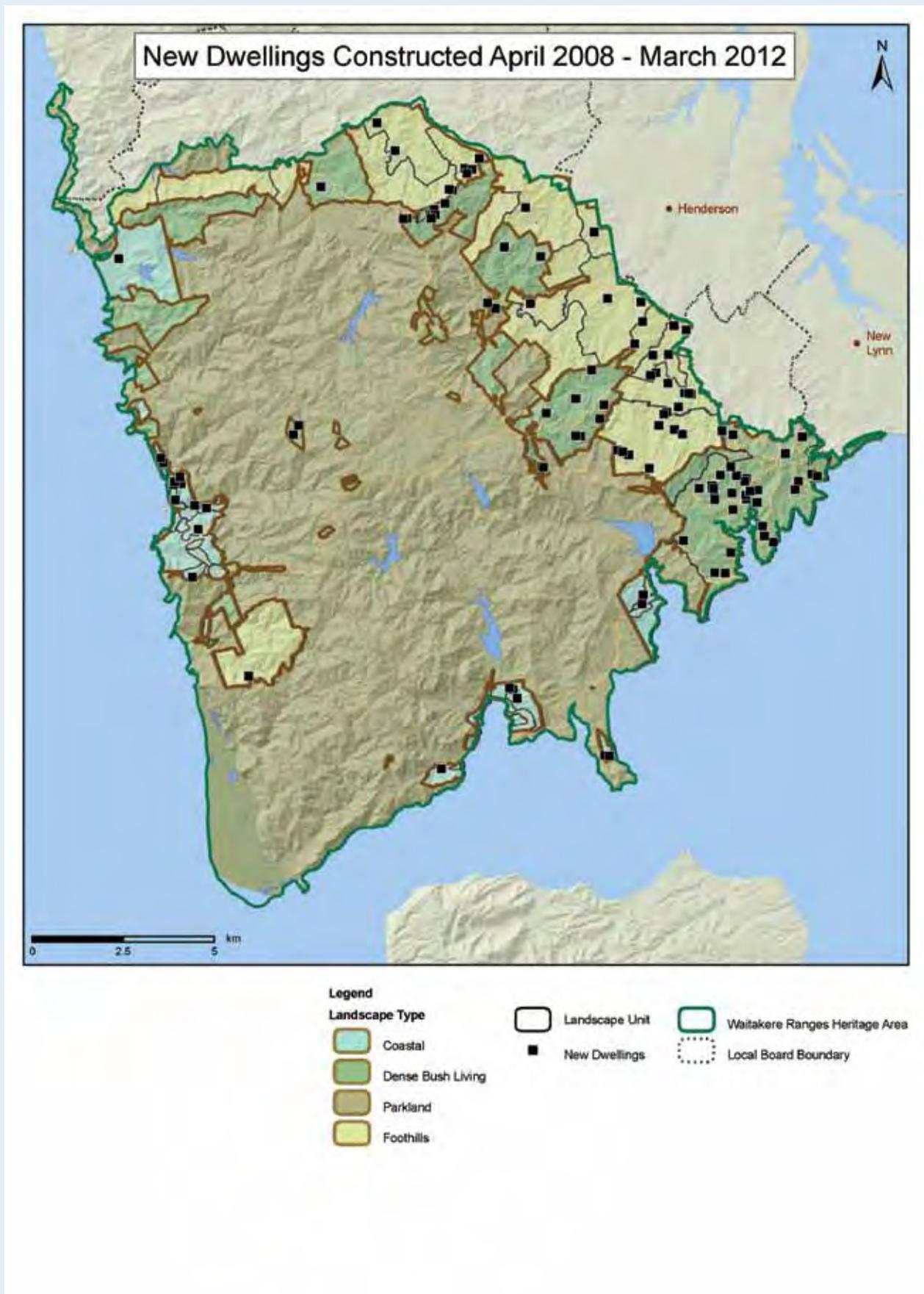
### Key findings

- A total of 29 subdivision consents involving 76 new lots were granted between April 2008 and March 2012 in the heritage area.
- Consents for 125 new dwellings and 198 extensions were implemented during this period, and there has been an estimated annual increase in 'urban footprint' (buildings and impermeable surfaces) of two hectares per annum. There were also 87 consents granted for activities (built development, earthworks and vegetation removal) associated with sensitive ridgelines (as identified in the District Plan).
- Demand for new development, as evidenced by land use consents and building permits, has gradually reduced over the past decade.
- Annually there have been about 100 land use consent applications to clear vegetation with 71 per cent of applications relating to clearing a single tree.
- There has been an estimated clearance of vegetation cover (indigenous and exotic trees and shrubs) of 14 hectares per annum. Much of this vegetation removal can be attributed to the felling of exotic pine woodlots and weed removal in the foothills. Most instances are small scale.
- A proportion of vegetation clearance is occurring as either a permitted or unconsented activity. This is generally small scale and is not having a significant cumulative effect on ecological or landscape values.
- There are still a number of vacant sites (about 900) and land which has subdivision potential (about 700 new lots) in the heritage area. With the development of these opportunities, some locations will experience change in landscape qualities.
- The analysis of decisions on consent applications suggests that the Act and District Plan have enabled cumulative effects to be addressed, along with the appropriate use of conditions of consent to manage adverse effects. Commonly applied conditions address issues of recessive building colours and materials, non-reflective glazing and landscaping to mitigate visual effects.

Photograph illustrating the use of sympathetic design to accommodate new buildings in the landscape.



Figure 4



## Progress in achieving the objectives of the Act

- The relatively low level of development since the Act came into effect has in itself served to limit potential adverse effects, and those applications which have been received have generally been processed in a manner which has helped to achieve the objectives of the Act.
- There have been no applications for activities within the heritage area of a scale or character which would:
  - o adversely effect the intrinsic landscape character of any part of the area
  - o impact the undeveloped coast
  - o introduce significant elements of urbanisation, or
  - o threaten the quietness and darkness of the ranges or the coast.
- In terms of development and extension of urban footprint, the foothills have retained their buffering and transition role and there have been no development proposals that would affect the role of the foothills (in particular their east-facing escarpment) as the visual backdrop to the Auckland region.

## Strategic issues for consideration

- It will be important for the Unitary Plan to give effect to the Act and take account of the unique character of the heritage area. Those aspects of the planning and consenting framework which contribute to the achievement of the Act's objectives should be identified, retained and incorporated into the Unitary Plan framework, along with appropriate methods which help to address the issues identified in this report.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- Modifications to the resource consent monitoring and reporting system (Pathways) should be considered and put into effect to provide more efficient monitoring and reporting of consented activities in the heritage area.
- Improved monitoring of vegetation growth and regeneration and the effectiveness of planting and weed management conditions and covenants should be undertaken so that their contribution to landscape and ecosystem enhancement and restoration can be properly assessed.
- 'Snapshot' records of the urban footprint (buildings and impervious surfaces) for the heritage area and adjacent urban areas should be created and maintained, preferably on a regular basis.

## 2.3 Ecosystems and ecosystem services

The Waitākere Ranges is ecologically significant as one of the largest areas of coastal and lowland forest with intact sequences remaining in the region. It supports a wide diversity of habitats including forest, shrubland, freshwater streams and rivers, sand flats, dunes, coastal turfs and wetlands (including the Whatipu Scientific Reserve, the largest wetland complex in the region). The forest types reflect the history of forest clearance and milling but include remnant kauri and podocarp broadleaf forest, coastal forest and large areas of regenerating manuka and kanuka shrubland. These are identified as heritage features which are to be protected, restored and enhanced.

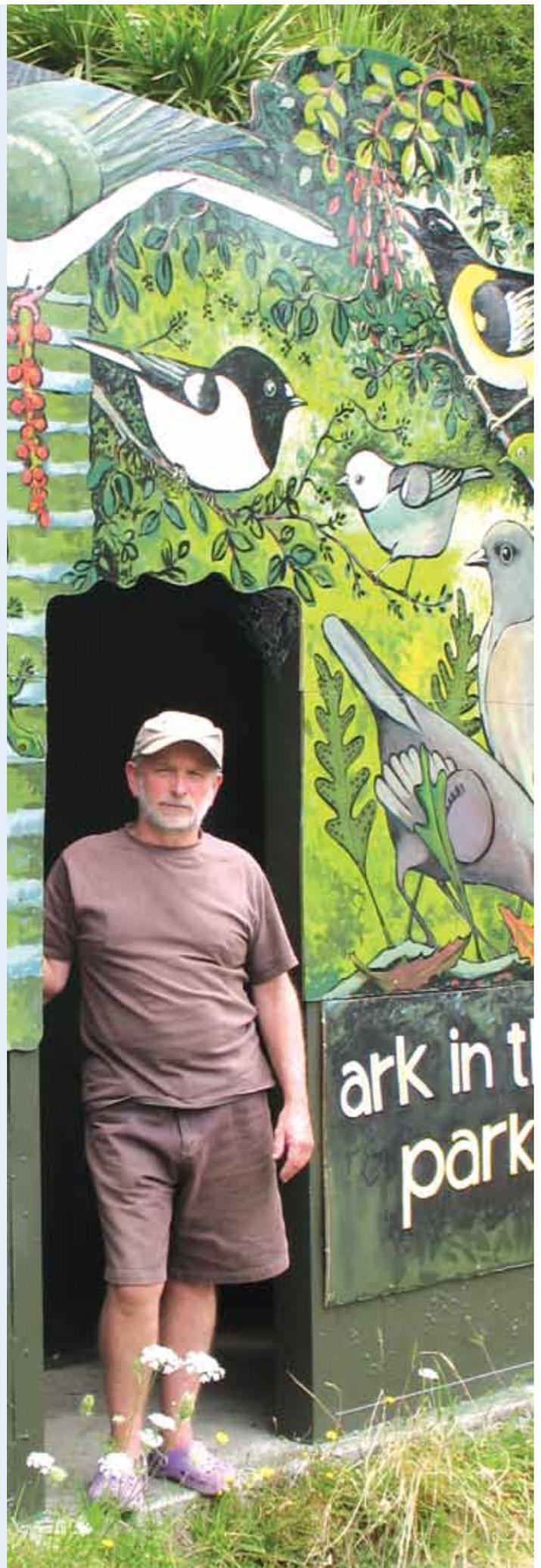
The regional park is known to support 540 species of indigenous plants, several thousand insect species, over 100 snail species, 71 bird species, six lizard and two skink species, the long-tailed bat and Hochstetter's frog.

The heritage area as a whole is the home of 93 nationally-threatened species, comprising of 58 vascular plants (including one endemic shrub), one species of moss, 27 bird species (with Whatipu being a particular 'hot spot' for threatened birds), three reptiles, one species of frog, one species of bat, and at least three invertebrates. One hundred and forty-eight plant species are considered to be regionally threatened.

### Key findings

- Kauri dieback has emerged as a major and significant threat to the future of the heritage area's forest ecosystems, compounding the threats posed by pest plants and animals. It is widespread and it is estimated that at least eight per cent of dense areas of kauri forest are affected, with an additional three per cent probably infected. Seventy per cent of known kauri dieback sites are located within 50 metres of the regional park track network.
- Apart from kauri dieback disease, overall results from the regional forest, wetland and freshwater habitat monitoring programmes suggest that native ecosystems in the heritage area are in relatively good health on a wide range of indicators, although lake quality is degraded. Most indicators are based on monitoring sites within the regional park. Threats such as weeds and pest animals and decline in water quality are likely to be greater in the foothills and outside the boundaries of the park.
- Five minute bird counts undertaken in forest monitoring plots in 2008 and 2011 indicate that commonly identified species numbers have remained relatively static, with wetland monitoring sites confirming that these habitats provide a stronghold for nationally threatened fernbird and spotless crane.
- Important habitat management initiatives such as Ark in the Park are demonstrating the value of private, public and voluntary sector initiatives for both the heritage area and the wider region.
- Almost 80 per cent of the heritage area's indigenous forest, scrub and wetlands have statutory protection under the RMA and through public ownership, which should ensure the long-term protection of the forests and natural ecosystems in the area.
- Since 2008, the area protected by reserves and covenants has increased by 178 ha, with 170 ha of this being indigenous ecosystems protected in reserves.

- Monitoring sites for weeds in the regional park indicate a low exotic plant or dominance of weedy saplings to indigenous biomass – overall 0.1 per cent of biomass in weedy exotic plants.
- Expenditure on weed control through council's biosecurity operations has stayed about the same between 2008 and 2012.
- Residual trap-catch levels of possums have fluctuated, with a peak in 2012 of 6.58 per cent, above the two per cent target threshold set by the council. This was identified as a consequence of a periodic localised hotspot in the north-west of the regional park which is currently being addressed by a specific possum control programme.
- Streams draining into the foothills have 64 per cent riparian cover along their length, while those in draining to the Tasman Sea and Manukau Harbour have 94 per cent.
- Stream ecosystem health and water quality for the monitored streams show good results. For example, macroinvertebrate community indicators show that high-quality aquatic ecosystems are maintained at the five monitored streams, with the highest counts within the Wekatahi and Marawhara Streams. Native fish monitoring indicated excellent and very good results for all monitored streams except the Waitākere River which scored a 'fair' result. Two streams (Cascades and Opanuku) are monitored for water quality, scoring first and fifth respectively when compared with the 25 sites monitored throughout the region.
- The condition of the heritage area's wetlands scored well against the indicators for habitat condition, although there is a high proportion of exotic plant biomass in the monitored sites.
- Ecosystem quality in Lake Wainamu and Lake Kawaupaku is of concern, with zooplankton counts in Lake Wainamu being one of the lowest scores in the region. Submerged plant indicators illustrate that the general trend for both lakes is in the poor range.



## Progress in achieving the objectives of Act

- The wide range of council and community initiatives that are being undertaken across the heritage area (see Volume 2 for further details) are contributing strongly to the protection and enhancement of its ecosystems.
- The heritage area has experienced only limited modification to its ecosystems as a result of development and activities since the Act took effect. Most of the area is adequately protected through public ownership and/or District Plan provisions.
- The potential impact of threatening biological processes (in particular kauri dieback, and the spread of exotic plants in wetlands and some forests) presents significant challenges.

## Strategic issues for consideration

- The long term ecological implications of kauri dieback disease are already concerning. The heritage area will form an important part of the regional response. The extension of local initiatives, to avoid and manage the risks, needs to be considered.
- Uptake of heritage area covenants has been relatively low since the Act came into effect. However, the growing success of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods programme suggests that there is potential for active stewardship of private land to increase with appropriate support and incentives.
- The role of the heritage area in species-based monitoring and management programmes at national, regional and local levels needs to be identified more clearly, particularly in the context of the Biodiversity Strategy for the Auckland Region, the Auckland Plan targets to reduce the number of threatened species, and the area's contribution to the North West Wild Link.
- The Land Cover Database is a high-level policy tool, and lacks site-based detail for property-based assessment of cumulative changes to habitat condition and vegetation cover. Results are also only available on a seven to ten year cycle which does not align well with the five-yearly monitoring cycle under the Act.
- Methods for addressing degraded water quality in Lake Wainamu and other degraded aquatic habitats should continue to be investigated and appropriate management responses considered.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- Better baseline information should be established on a full range of threatened species and ecosystem types, giving priority to those that contribute to achieving national, regional and local biodiversity objectives.
- Continued support should be given to collecting and refining environmental and ecological datasets to provide reliable information on short, medium and long-term trends.
- High resolution aerial photography and digitising key data should be done regularly to provide better information to assess habitat and landscape quality and change.
- Better monitoring of habitat quality outside the regional park should be done, particularly in areas of existing or potential ecological value in the bush living landscapes and foothills, including an extension of the network of monitoring sites. Tangata whenua, landowners and community groups will be important potential partners in pursuing this.
- Consideration should be given to reporting on sites in the heritage area that are included in the national Land Use and Carbon Analysis System (LUCAS) programme.



## 2.4 Cultural and built heritage

Cultural and built heritage includes the physical evidence of both pre-European Maori settlement and European settlement activity. The heritage area has a human history that dates back about 1,000 years and physical evidence of that occupation remains.

### Key findings

- There are 1,238 historic heritage items located within the heritage area. These are currently recorded in the council's Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI). Post-European settlement features dominate the sites recorded (64 per cent) and are comprised primarily of built heritage sites (36.5 per cent) and economic and industrial activities such as timber extraction (13 per cent), water impoundment (2 per cent) and infrastructure (8 per cent). The remainder are comprised of a range of Pre-European Maori settlement sites that comprise (31 per cent) of the total CHI sites in the study area.
- To date, the largest and most comprehensive heritage assessment of the heritage area remains Haywood and Diamond's 1970s surveys. Subsequent field surveys have contributed new information but tend to be focused on the periphery of the area, are unsystematic and reflect specific survey objectives and project proposals. The extent of the surviving historic heritage in the dense core of the regional park remains unknown.
- The extent and rate of loss of heritage sites is unknown due to limited survey and site re-visits following first recording.
- There are no pre-European settlement sites specifically protected under the District Plan.

### Progress in achieving the objectives of act

- Progress towards the protection, restoration and enhancement of evidence of past human activities since the Act came into effect has been very limited.

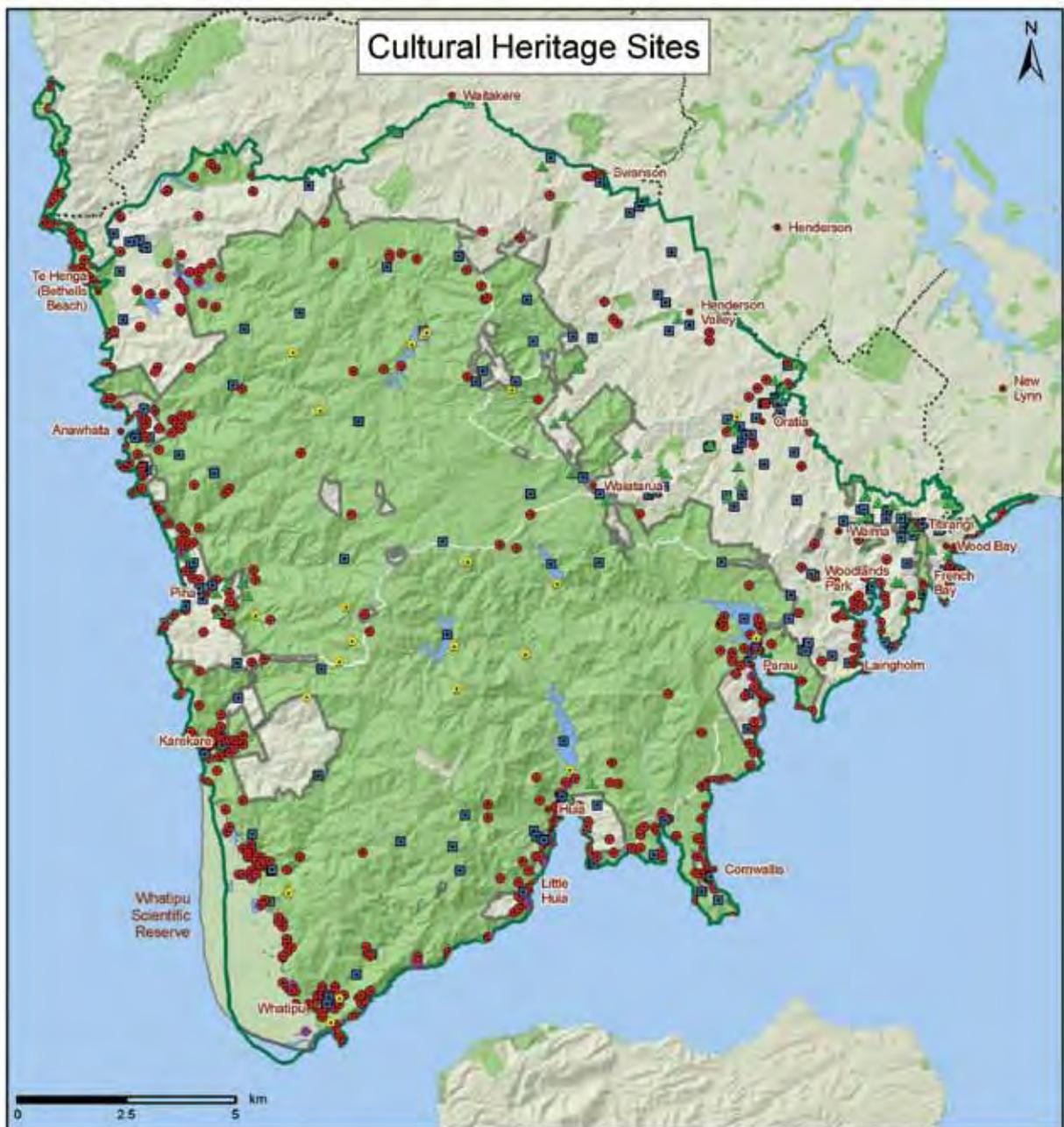
### Strategic issues for consideration

- Recent analysis by the council has not successfully established the current state of the historic heritage environment in the heritage area. The reasons for this include:
  - o a lack of available data related to the current condition of historic heritage
  - o numerous heritage practitioners have observed and added to the databases used for source information. This information is not consistent, and does not fulfill the accepted requirements of condition monitoring and assessment, and
  - o the data sources contain little information regarding condition, and periodic, regular monitoring is not occurring. This a key component in any monitoring programme for the historic environment.
- There is a need to empower mana whenua in the care, management and presentation of heritage places within the heritage area.

### Recommendations for future monitoring

- To understand the risk to historic heritage and site condition within the heritage area, regular monitoring is recommended, working closely with tangata whenua and local community groups.
- Highest initial priority should be given to sites at greatest risk, in particular:
  - o peripheral sites, especially on the open west coastline
  - o ephemeral non-protected sites, especially pre-European sites
  - o areas of farming where animals graze.

Figure 5



**Legend**

- Archaeological Site
- ▲ Historic Botanical Site
- Historic Structure
- Maritime Site
- ★ Reported Historic Site
- ▭ Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area
- ▭ Regional Park Boundary
- ⋯ Local Board Boundary

## 2.5 Recreation and visitor management

The foothills, bush, harbour and beaches of the Waitākere Ranges are one of Auckland's recreational treasures, loved by the communities that live in them and the people who visit them, and contribute to the liveability of the region.

All year round, but especially in summer weekends and holidays, people converge on the area, particularly the Manukau Harbour and West Coast beaches, Lake Wainamu and the tracks, waterfalls and viewpoints within the regional park. This Park is one of the most readily recognised and highly visited of all the Auckland regional parks. Visitors are mainly day-trippers, coming predominately from the nearby urban area of Auckland, but also from elsewhere in New Zealand and from overseas.

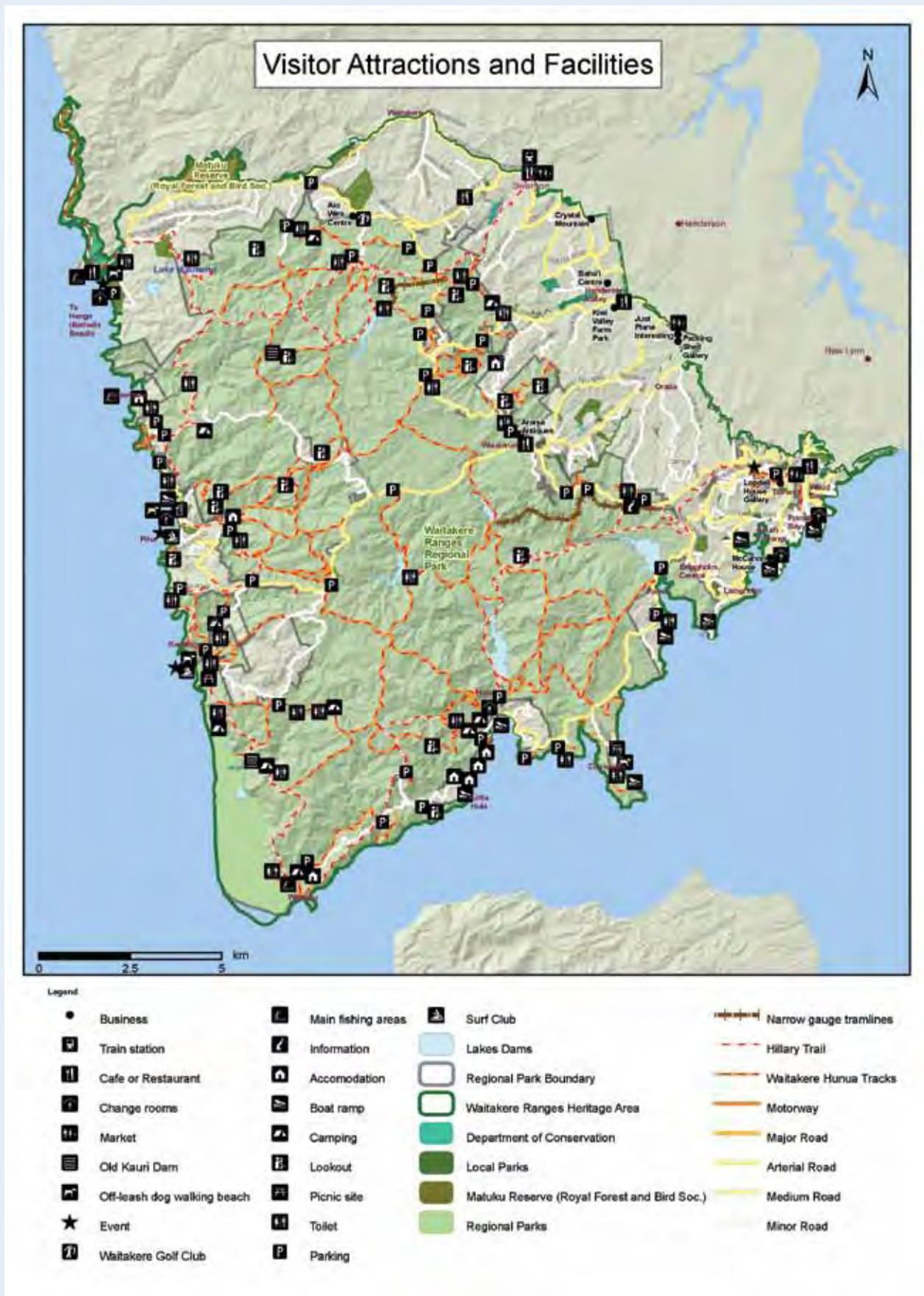
The Act identifies, as heritage features, the opportunities for wilderness experiences, recreation and relaxation in the heritage area, and the importance of the regional park as an accessible public place and recreation resource. The objectives of the Act seek to protect, restore and enhance these heritage features and protect in perpetuity the regional park for (among other matters) the benefit, use and enjoyment of New Zealanders.

### Key findings

- Within the regional park there are 264km of walking and tramping tracks, including a nature trail at Arataki, the Montana Heritage Trail and the 70km Hillary Trail opened in 2010.
- The west coast beaches are the most visited locations in the heritage area, in particular Piha (although visitor numbers at Piha have declined in recent years). During the past three summer seasons the highest headcount (taken at the busiest time of day by the Piha surf club) was 2220 people on the beach at Piha on 7 February 2010. Estimates from vehicle counts indicate a daily average of nearly 8000 people visiting Piha over a fortnight during the summer holidays. Arataki Visitor Centre with 188,827 visits in the year 2011/2012 and Cascade Kauri Park with 85,837 visits over the same period are the most heavily visited locations within the regional park, while Kitekite Falls, Fairy Falls and Karekare Falls are also easily accessible regional park 'hotspots' for visitors.
- Monitoring of trends in visitor activity at selected regional park locations has shown that there has been a steady increase in the use of the park since 2008. The number of visits has, on average, grown at a rate faster than the regional population growth, with visits to the Arataki Visitor Centre increasing by 40 per cent and visits to Piha's Glen Esk increasing by about 19 per cent over a three-year period. In contrast, visits to the wilderness destination of Whatipu have increased by only two per cent.
- The numbers of people using the regional park's accommodation facilities has increased, with 6186 overnights in the campgrounds and 561 nights booked in the baches in 2011/12 season. Notwithstanding the increase, the overall use of camp sites is well below their design capacity.
- Most visitors to the regional park are from west Auckland (33 per cent) and the former Auckland City area (27 per cent). A small number (15 per cent) are from outside the Auckland region, with most of these being international visitors visiting places such as the Arataki Visitor Centre.
- The use of the regional park for discretionary concession activities, managed through the Regional Parks Management Plan 2010 (RPMP), has been steady over the last five years.

- By far the greatest impact on recreational activity within the heritage area has been the recent discovery of kauri dieback disease. The role of visitors in helping to spread this disease is clear with almost 70 per cent of known kauri dieback sites within 50m of the track network, and popular visitor destinations such as Piha and the Cascades being the most affected. An extensive management programme has been put into place to try to prevent the spread of the disease. This includes quarantining 15 at-risk areas of land in the regional park (approximately 20 per cent of the area of the park) and the closure of over 27 kilometres of track (approximately 10 per cent of the total length of track in the park) to check the spread of the disease to areas that are currently free of it.
- Visitors help support the economic wellbeing of local communities. The accommodation and food services sector in the heritage area expanded in the period 2008 to 2011, with the number of businesses in the sector increasing from 45 to 55 and the number of employees from 190 to 265. Businesses in the other visitor-related sector, arts and recreation services, remained reasonably static.
- Consultation indicates that an adverse impact of visitors on the wellbeing of local communities stems from the behaviour of some visitors such as littering and dumping, vandalism, theft and illegal parking. Data from the regional park indicates that the incidence of many of these behaviours is decreasing.

Figure 6



## Progress in achieving the act

- The RPMP and decision making processes in the regional park take full account of the Act and assist in giving effect to it. Under the plan, large areas are managed for low intensity use while areas identified as visitor hotspots are managed to accept the expected number of visitors, while minimising visitor impact.
- In addition to extensive track maintenance, work in the past five years has included realignment and/or upgrading of the Montana Heritage Trail and Fairy Falls Track and construction of the Beveridge Track (which is one of only two tracks in the regional park available for recreation or family cycling). Progress is being made with planning and land acquisition for the Waitākere Ranges Foothills Walkway and with construction of a proposed new walkway linking Grendon and Landing Roads in Titirangi.

## Strategic issues for consideration

- The long-term impact of kauri dieback disease on recreational use of the area's forests is a significant and growing issue.
- There is no established plan or strategy in place to provide for and manage visitors to the heritage area as an integrated whole. The Waitākere Ranges Local Board is supporting the preparation of a visitor management plan which is due in 2014.
- An assessment is needed of the potential for recreational activities based on the distinctive heritage and character of the eastern foothills, including those which support traditional rural land uses and may help to take pressure off the regional park.
- There is also little systematic information available on:
  - o use made of local parks
  - o visitor satisfaction with local parks
  - o visitor impact on the wellbeing of local communities across the whole heritage area, and
  - o visitor impact on natural heritage features.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- Monitoring of visitor use and satisfaction should be extended to additional locations in the heritage area.

## 2.6 People and communities

The Act indicates that more than 21,000 people live in the heritage area (outside the regional park). Population growth in the area has been slow. The wellbeing of the residents of the heritage area is directly supported by its proximity to metropolitan Auckland. For many living in the foothills and bush areas, employment, shopping, services and education are all within an easy drive to the town centres located outside the heritage area.

With the communities set within and around the regional park, there is a strong sense of identity and distinctiveness, along with a strong stewardship ethic for the environment and advocacy for its protection. This is reflected in the wide range of community environmental initiatives being undertaken at all geographical scales across the heritage area and the strong advocacy and awareness-raising role played by groups such as the Waitākere Ranges Protection Society in particular.

The Act seeks to enable the residents of the heritage area to provide for their wellbeing and to be actively involved in its kaitiakitanga and stewardship. This is in the context of the overall thrust to protect, restore and enhance the heritage features.

The Act also includes provisions for preparing local area plans (LAPs). These provide the ability to localise the Act and its requirements, making it relevant to communities and considering what specific factors or actions could contribute to the protection, enhancement and restoration of the heritage features and the wellbeing of that community.

## Key findings

### Community Profile and Wellbeing

- The postponement of the 2011 census and lack of available data at the right scale has meant that there is very little useful recent information about the characteristics of the heritage area's communities.
- Demographic, social and economic information on the area's residents, compared with the Auckland region as a whole, highlights the following:
  - o slow population growth since 2008 (based on rate of new development)
  - o relatively fewer young people (15-29 yrs) and older median age
  - o growth in the number of professional and technical people working from home
  - o a high rate of home ownership
  - o a low-level of social and economic deprivation.
- There is little information available from which to assess the quality of life for heritage area residents in a way that reflects the characteristics of the area and the lifestyle opportunities it provides.

## Kaitiakitanga

- Significant and meaningful engagement between Auckland Council and Te Kawerau ā Maki regarding the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area has to date included the Arataki Visitors Centre and regular liaison meetings on regional park management.
- Since the changes to Auckland governance, there has been a low-level of engagement by tangata whenua in management and decision making, although there is considerable potential for this to increase.
- Both Te Kawerau ā Maki and Ngāti Whātua identify the need for improvement in the recognition of cultural heritage and strengthening of their partnerships with the council, and meaningful and sustainable engagement in the management of the heritage area.

## Community Stewardship

- The area covered and level of support for community stewardship projects has increased since 2008, in both the regional park and the wider heritage area.
- Communities were engaged in preparing LAPs and related initiatives in Oratia, Waiatarua, Titirangi Village, Henderson Valley/Opunuku and are doing so in Laingholm/Waima Woodlands Park and Parau. Preliminary work on a LAP for Bethells/Te Henga has commenced.
- Community-based ecological restoration projects have successfully continued at Cascades (Ark in the Park) and La Trobe, with strong local environmental group involvement at Piha, Whatipu, Te Henga, Karekare and other sites. Together they cover about 3,000 hectares.
- There have been 26 sustainable neighbourhood groups created since 2008, active in weed and pest control and ecological restoration across approximately 350 hectares of private and public land.
- Local schools are widely involved in environmental education (including Enviro Schools).

- There has been a decrease in Environmental Initiatives Fund support for environmental initiatives in the heritage area since 2010.
- The ability to establish covenants to protect private land under the Act has not so far been used, although covenants are in place through the former Waitākere City Green Network, QEII and linked to subdivision and land use consents.

## Progress in achieving the act

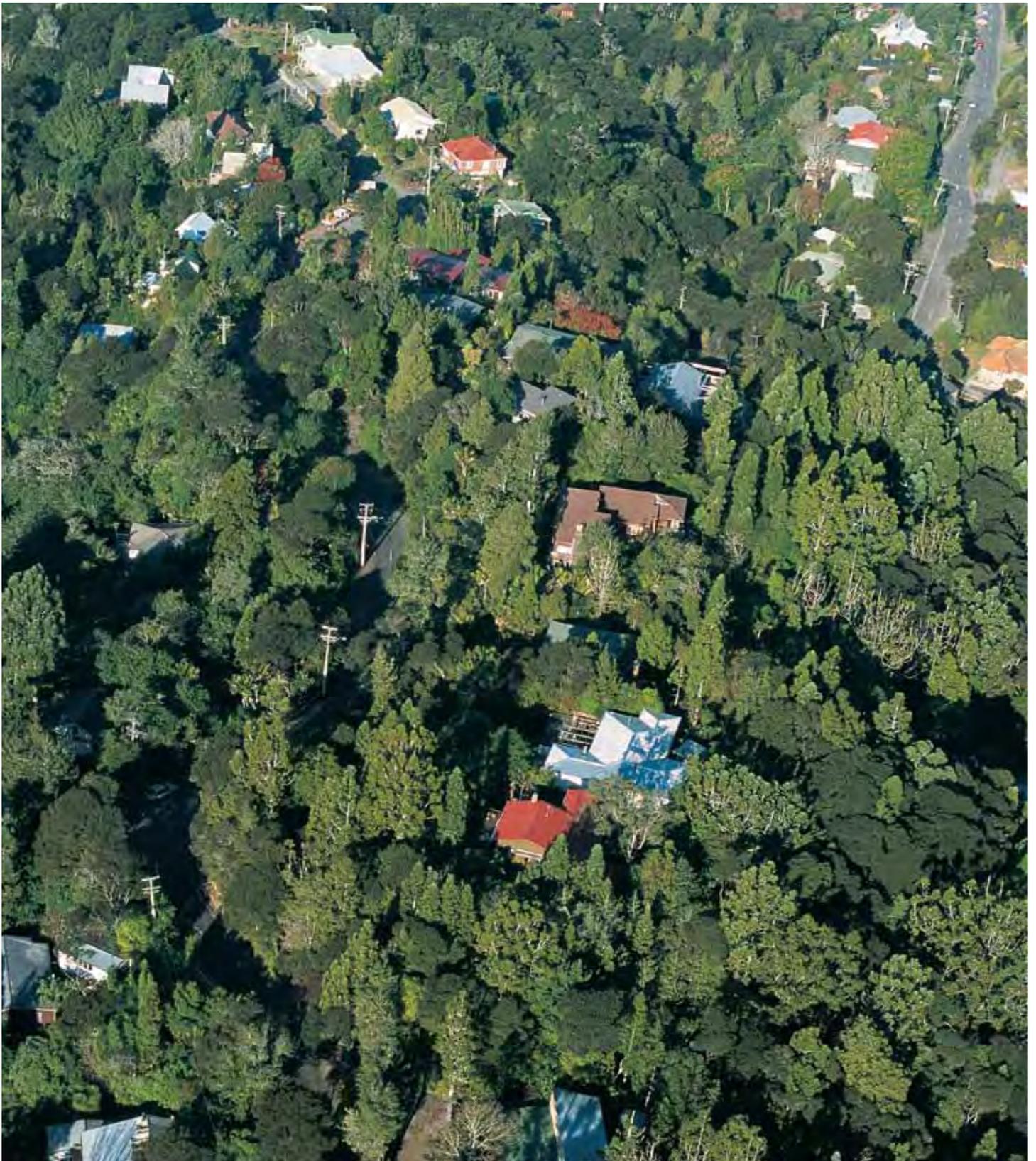
- Opportunities for stewardship of the heritage features have increased, for example, through the introduction of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Programme, the Arataki Gateway Sanctuary, and the continuing success of Ark in the Park.

## Strategic issues for consideration

- Further discussion is needed with tangata whenua regarding the development of their relationships with the heritage area and their role in its management.
- More work is required to consider those factors that contribute to people's wellbeing and the desire for residents to live in the heritage area. Traditional indicators such as the census do not necessarily correlate with the matters outlined in the Act, and therefore a more targeted set of quality-of-life indicators could be developed based on matters of wellbeing that can be influenced by the Act, the heritage area and its heritage features.

## Recommendations for future monitoring

- Include future surveys or assessments of community wellbeing in a future monitoring programme (and as part of future LAPs) and incorporate results into the next five-year monitoring report.
- Develop a quality-of-life indicator tailored to the experience of living in the heritage area. This could be implemented as a quality-of-life survey before the preparation of the proposed area spatial plan for the Waitākere Ranges Local Board area (provisionally scheduled for 2016).



## 2.7 Funding implications

Financial records from annual plans and long-term plans and departmental budgets indicate that specific projects to implement the Act have resulted in an average annual spend of about \$230,000, together with an estimated 3.5 full-time staff. This does not include programmes that were already being done as a consequence of council's responsibilities under other legislation. Further details are included in Appendix 2 of Volume 2.

## Part 3: Conclusions and general recommendations

This monitoring report has brought together and summarised the available information on the state of the heritage area environment and progress towards achieving the objectives of the Act. Where relevant data is available this has been used to develop indicators of trends and changes, or to provide a baseline against which future changes can be assessed.

The report has also identified gaps and limitations in the available data and recommends improvements to the monitoring system to be considered before the preparation of the next five-yearly report in 2018.

### The monitoring system

- The availability of and access to relevant data is providing a partial picture of the type and rate of change in the heritage area. This is due to:
  - o lack of data/research on some key topics and issues (e.g. condition of cultural heritage sites; recreational use of beaches and other areas outside the regional park; the small sample of stream monitoring sites; information on key causes affecting the decline of traditional foothill land uses and the potential to support and retain them; inability to distinguish between indigenous, exotic and pest weed vegetation from aerial photographs)
  - o timing or frequency of data capture (e.g. aerial photography, census data, land cover database (LCDB))
  - o limitations in the ability of quantitative indicators to reflect qualitative and significant changes, particularly at a local level (e.g. indicators of 'urban footprint' and vegetation change)

These deficiencies are greatest for areas outside the regional park where the monitoring system is generally less well developed but changes are likely to be occurring more rapidly.
- It is also difficult to create measurable indicators for some of the Act's objectives (for example, quietness and darkness, integrated decision making) due to their subjective or qualitative nature (e.g. 'containment', 'distinctiveness') complexity (e.g. mosaic of rural land uses), difficulty of recording them empirically (e.g. quality of decision making). The potential to develop such indicators should be explored, but there is likely to be continued reliance on qualitative description and evaluation for at least some of them.
- A process to allow easier, more timely and coordinated collection and analysis of data needs to be established to complement the existing monitoring systems which are generally focused on the regional park. A five-year monitoring programme linked to the reporting cycle needs to be established.
- There is potential for increased involvement of tangata whenua and local communities in monitoring and follow-up management programmes.

## Recommended next steps

Based on the recommendations in this report and its supporting technical documents there is a need to identify, prioritise and seek resources for a future monitoring framework for the heritage area. This should be a collaborative effort across the relevant council departments and needs to be developed in consultation and collaboration with tangata whenua and the local communities. These considerations need to be incorporated into a strategy for ongoing monitoring which assists with future decision making for the heritage area.

The strategic issues should be further considered by the council's internal coordination group for the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Programme. Further reports with proposals to address the strategic issues can be brought to the Waitākere Ranges Local Board, Parks, Heritage and Recreation Forum and Regional Development and Operations Committee as appropriate.

## References

Paterson, M. (2009) "Ngāti Whātua and West Auckland" in Macdonald, F. and Kerr, R. (eds) "West – The History of Waitākere" Auckland, Random House.

Te Kawerau ā Maki (2013) "Tangata Whenua Waitākere Ranges Heritage Update Report" Unpublished report prepared for Auckland Council.

See Volume 2 for full list of documents referenced in Volumes 1 and 2.

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