



## Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

# Forest & Bird Guidance on Exploring charging for access to some public conservation land consultation

### What is being consulted on?

DOC are considering options for charging for public access to some sites such as Mautohe Cathedral Cove, Tongariro National Park, Milford Sound Piopiotahi and Aoraki Mount Cook.

If DOC do charge, they are wanting to know what a charging scheme might look like - charge everyone the same, charge everyone but charge New Zealanders less than international visitors or charge only international visitors (there could be exemptions dependent on age or for volunteers working for DOC or on DOC land etc.).

DOC are also looking at options for where that money is used - within the area charged for, within the regional area, or nationally.

### Why charge?

DOC are underfunded and have been deferring asset maintenance for years, meaning some facilities, assets and infrastructure are not performing to the standard required to keep up with demand.

Increased and intensified storms and climate related events has resulted in reactive spending on DOC assets which was not budgeted for.

Construction and material costs have increased drastically, meaning DOC assets are becoming more and more expensive to build and maintain.

Some tracks have very high use, and it is thought that charging may help control visitor numbers to lighten the impact on assets and on biodiversity.

### What is the benefit to nature?

The discussion document does not clearly outline where a charging system will benefit biodiversity. An assumption is that more money in the 'asset maintenance pot' means more left in the 'nature pot'. That will mean reactive unbudgeted maintenance and repairs are not funded from the essential funds needed for conservation.



Increased revenue may mean more money for DOC to fulfil their responsibilities and have better conservation outcomes.

If charging does free up capacity at overpopulated tracks, it could potentially have a positive effect on nature. However, if that results in displacement and people using other less popular sites more, the effect could be negative on nature at those less-used sites.

### What do Forest & Bird think?

We recognise that there are a range of views about potentially charging for access to some sites.

Our concern is that DOC has adequate revenue and funding to continue its management of natural heritage, for maintaining, restoring and protecting ecosystems, habitats and species, and that people can access and connect with nature easily.

Forest & Bird want any potential charging system to:

- Keep nature, biodiversity and ecosystems at its core; and
- Not deter people from connecting with nature; and
- Be easy to administer and maintain and not costly or a draw on already stretched resources; and
- Be cohesive with other income avenues (e.g. the IVL); and
- Not require sweeping changes to legislation which could impact negatively on nature; and
- Deliver a net, sustained increase in overall investment in biodiversity and conservation (i.e. adds to DOC funding, we don't want any potential income to replace funding received from other sources);
- Not lead to the expectation of increased/upgraded levels of service, requiring more investment; and
- Not displace the public to use less-popular sites more, impacting nature at those sites; and
- Meet the Crown's obligations around Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

### What should my submission say?

We would encourage you to touch on the bullet points we have mentioned above. You can expand on those themes and if you wish, make them your own. We think it is really important that biodiversity and conservation is at the heart of all the work that DOC does, and this should be the main highlight in your submission.



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It is up to you if you wish to comment on the options for charging and how that money is returned into DOC's work with your own personal opinions and experience.

You can fill out the survey that DOC have put together [here](#) (DOC's preferred option).

Alternatively, you can write your own submission and email it

to: [accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz](mailto:accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz).

**REMINDER!** DOC are also consulting on 'modernising conservation land management' which proposes significant changes, including making it easier to exchange or sell off conservation land. The consultation can be found [here](#).

**IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO WRITE FULL SUBMISSIONS OR FILL OUT THE DOC SURVEY, YOU CAN SUBMIT VIA OUR 'QUICK SUBMISSION' ON BOTH THESE CONSULTATIONS.**