

1 March 2024

Dear Kawau Island Community / Kia ora koutou,

Adapting our approach in response to community feedback

In November 2023, the project team uploaded a summary of feedback from Kawau Island residents, landowners and organisations in response to the feasibility report to remove pest animals from Kawau Island. The report continues to be available on our project webpage www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/kawau-island

Your feedback on the feasibility study and through previous engagements has shown strong levels of support for:

- the concept of a pest free Kawau Island and the importance of conservation work
- the need to take action against introduced pests
- the biodiversity outcomes that removal of pest species would achieve.

Your feedback also indicated that some members of the community still hold concerns about different aspects of the project. Some residents expressed reservations about specific eradication methods, particularly the use of toxins during the rodent control phase, while others expressed a preference to have toxins contained in a bait station. Some would prefer wallabies to be controlled rather than removed. The summary also highlighted that additional community representation in the project is important.

In response to your feedback, we have made the following changes to our initial project proposal.

1. We are amending our initial project proposal's operational approach to carry out the proposed multi-species eradication as two stand-alone projects.
2. We will establish a new project structure with greater community representation.

Amending our initial project proposal

Our original operational approach was made up of two closely linked eradication phases, the removal of wallabies in phase one, followed closely by the removal of rodents, possums, and stoats in phase two. As a result of your feedback and following further advice from island eradication specialists we are now proposing to split the eradication programme into two standalone projects with an expanded time frame between them.

1. The first project would focus on the eradication of **browsers**, specifically wallabies and possums. Removal of browsing pests would help restore and preserve native vegetation and wildlife habitat, enhance biodiversity, and reduce the risk of environmental degradation. For wallabies, eradication would be achieved primarily through hunting. For possums, this would likely be a combination of the use of bait stations and hunting. This would take place over an approximately 24-month period.
2. The second project would focus on **predators**, specifically rodents, and if present, stoats¹, and would not be expected to commence prior to winter 2026 at the earliest. Rats and stoats prey on indigenous birds, reptiles and invertebrates. They have caused the decline or extinction of many of

¹ We are currently undertaking assessments to determine the presence or absence of stoats on Kawau island. A rapid assessment carried out in February did not detect the presence of stoats. We are now planning for a specialist scat detection dog to be brought to the island to provide further confidence of this assessment.

our native insects and lizards. The benefits of the second project would be demonstrated through longer-term biodiversity monitoring of ecosystems and individual species.

While a combined approach has benefits from a cost and operational efficiency perspective, it is important to recognise that community acceptance is critical to the proposed multi-species eradication effort. A collaborative approach, involving community conservation groups, island residents and agency partners will be required, working together in a holistic approach that considers longer term restoration outcomes, including weed management and restoration planting.

By deferring the timeline for the second project, we will be able to realise and track the benefits of removing browsers from Kawau Island. It will also allow additional time to work with the community on any concerns regarding the aerial and hand-broadcasting of toxins required for rodent eradication. It is important to note that no decisions have been made at this time as to whether the rat eradication project will ultimately proceed.

Ensuring community voice at all project levels

Your feedback clearly demonstrated that community involvement and engagement is a critical part of the project. In response, we will establish a new project structure that ensures that the community has a voice in the project and is involved in the project design. This new structure will be flexible and able to adapt to the needs of the eradication programme over time and provide additional transparency and two-way communication between organisations and the diverse range of community voices.

The project structure will comprise of:

- an inter-agency coordination group - Te Rōpū Whakahaere
- a project steering committee
- project workstreams (e.g. Operations, communications and engagement, funding and philanthropy).

It is also proposed that a community advisory forum be established.

Te Rōpū Whakahaere - inter agency coordination group

Te Rōpū Whakahaere, an inter-agency coordination group, will be made up of representatives from Auckland Council, Ngāti Manuhiri, and DOC.

This group will work together to ensure alignment between the respective organisations in their support for the project, while recognising each has its own resourcing, statutory and risk management obligations. The group will endorse recommendations from the steering committee, and provide feedback and direction to ensure obligations and responsibilities are being met. Each agency will also have the ability to escalate matters specific to their responsibilities, if and when necessary, within their organisation.

Representatives from the steering committee, including community representatives, will meet regularly with Te Rōpū Whakahaere to maintain transparency, open communication channels and confirm the direction of the project.

Steering Committee

The project Steering Committee will be made-up of six members. It is proposed that three members will represent the community, being the chairs of the community organisations Kawau Island Residents and Ratepayers Association (KIRRA), the Pohutukawa Trust, and a representative from the yet to be established

community advisory forum. They will ensure the communities knowledge of the island, perspectives and feedback are considered in the project design.

The remaining three members will represent Auckland Council, Ngāti Manuhiri and DOC, to ensure a mix of technical and cultural expertise.

The Steering Committee will steer the operational and tactical direction of the project, including making shared decisions relating to design and delivery approach, the methods used, funding proposals, and communications strategies. They will also steer the direction of the project workstreams which will deliver the day-to-day operational aspects of the project.

The Steering Committee, including community representatives, will meet and work with Te Rōpū Whakahaere to discuss the project direction, risks, issues and opportunities.

Community Advisory Forum

During engagement, we heard from a significant number of individuals that you wanted an additional voice to that of KIRRA and the Pohutukawa Trust to be included in the project structure.

We propose the establishment of a community advisory forum that is led and driven by the community itself, serving as an engaged stakeholder forum. Ideally it would ensure a diverse range of community voices and perspectives including business, charitable trusts, conservation groups and residents / ratepayers. This group would act as another conduit between the community and the steering group to share updates, ideas, concerns, or suggestions both ways.

As it may take some time to establish this group, council is looking to support the establishment of the community advisory forum with the intention of stepping back and empowering community management as soon as this is achieved. Such support could look like venue hire costs, or a zoom license to hold online forums, helping establish a terms of reference, and sending project team members to attend meetings if and when invited.

Council also offers group advisory and capacity building support, as well as mentoring, for community groups and leaders. These programmes are independent of the proposed multi-species eradication projects but could be made available to this forum

To establish the group, we are seeking interest from individuals or organisations who are interested in being part of a community forum.

Please send your expressions of interest to kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz by 31 March 2024.

If the establishment of the community advisory forum is unsuccessful in its first attempt, a space will be held on the steering group for that voice to join at a later date.

Next steps

Following peer reviewed technical analysis on the feasibility of removing pest species from Kawau Island, incorporating feedback from the community, and adapting our project approach accordingly, we are ready to advance from the feasibility phase of the program to the operational planning phase.

The new operational approach and project structure has been approved by Te Rōpū Whakahaere in principle pending:

1. Establishment of the project structure, including the formation of a community forum.
2. Progressing the detailed operational planning needed for wallaby and possum eradication.
3. Continuing discussions with crown agencies and third-party funders to secure funding required for the wallaby and possum eradication project.
4. A better understanding of the property access agreement landscape is understood, including arrangement of access agreements for a number of key sites.

Further information

If you have any questions about the project structure, feedback summary, feasibility report, or proposal in general, you can reach us at kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Ngā mihi nui,

Kawau Island project team

Project Structure

