



15 December 2020

Tēnā koe,

Re: Official Information Act (OIA) Request – Banks Peninsula Turtle

I am writing in response to your email dated 3 December 2020 and in which you requested the following information:

I have a number of questions relating to the turtle found dead in Banks Peninsula:

- 1. What interest does Te Papa have in a turtle?*
- 2. Did local iwi express no interest in the turtle? If so, when and how?*
- 3. How was the deceased turtle transported to Wellington? What was the cost?*
- 4. How long was the ex-turtle in Te Papa? What was the cost?*
- 5. Did local iwi later express an interest having the late turtle returned? If so, when and how?*
- 6. How was the departed turtle transported to Banks Peninsula? What was the cost?*
- 7. How many vehicles were involved in returning the late turtle?*
- 8. What has Te Papa gained from the turtle's fleeting visit?*
- 9. What costs has Te Papa incurred in this event?*
- 10. What does the local iwi intend to do with said turtle?*

We address each of your questions as follows:

1. What interest does Te Papa have in a turtle?

Te Papa cares for the national collections of New Zealand, including collections of natural history. Leatherback turtles are an unusual animal with no close relatives. While Te Papa already has a small number of specimens of this species in its collection, we do not have a complete skeleton. The intention in obtaining this particular animal was to prepare a full skeleton that could be used for research purposes. Te Papa has an informal overall goal to obtain 3 skeletons of each of the 5 marine turtle species that occur in New Zealand. A driving force behind this goal is that we have recently acquired many fossil turtle bones, so wanted a representative collection of turtle skeletons for comparison. The skeletons will help us identify and classify the fossils. Such skeletons would form part of Te Papa's long-term collections that could be used for any future research (or potentially display) purposes. Another intention for this particular turtle, given its relatively fresh state, was to conduct a necropsy on it in order to determine its cause of death and gather other biological information for the global turtle research community. Although the distribution of leatherback turtles is wide, there is a lot of concern about the future of the species because numbers have seriously declined during the last century as a result of intense egg collection and fisheries bycatch. Globally, the status of the species (according to the *International Union for Conservation of Nature*) is Vulnerable, but many subpopulations (such as ours in the Pacific) are considered to be Critically Endangered. Through our research we hoped to be able to contribute to the broader understanding of the threats facing this rare species.

2. Did local iwi express no interest in the turtle? If so, when and how?

Te Papa was advised by DOC that the Koukourārata Rūnaka had provided approval for Te Papa to receive the honu (turtle) prior to collection. DOC had negotiated this conversation with Koukourārata. Te Papa worked with Department of Conservation in order to receive the turtle.

3. How was the deceased turtle transported to Wellington? What was the cost?

The turtle was collected by Te Papa from the Department of Conservation office in Christchurch and driven up to Wellington in Te Papa's Toyota Hilux. The cost was \$475.75.

4. How long was the ex-turtle in Te Papa? What was the cost?

The turtle was delivered to Te Papa (Tory Street facility) on 21 March 2019 and has remained there ever since (frozen). There are no additional costs to housing the turtle within our freezer.

5. Did local iwi later express an interest having the late turtle returned? If so, when and how?

Te Papa was first alerted to a media request regarding issues relating to consultation and support on 29 March 2019 and has been in discussion with Koukourārata since then regarding the return and repatriation of the honu. Communication was received verbally from the then Chair of the rūnaka, Charles Crofts to the Kaihautū of Te Papa, Arapata Hakiwai on 8 April 2019 advising that it was likely that the rūnaka would be seeking the return of the turtle. Written communication regarding the return and ceremonial requirements were received from rūnaka representative Matiu Payne on 29 May 2019. Various discussions were held regarding the return of the honu and the ceremony and its logistical and tikanga requirements over the period.

6. How was the departed turtle transported to Banks Peninsula? What was the cost?

The turtle will be transported to Banks Peninsula in a refrigerated van on 11 December 2020. There are no costs to Te Papa.

7. How many vehicles were involved in returning the late turtle?

Te Papa is not responsible for the transportation of the turtle so we are unable to answer this question

8. What has Te Papa gained from the turtle's fleeting visit?

In terms of science objectives, Te Papa has not conducted any research on the turtle during its time at Te Papa so has not gained any research insights.

9. What costs has Te Papa incurred in this event?

Domestic transport and accommodation (8pax) - \$4,763.46
Powhiri and kai (40pax) - \$880.00
Materials for te honu crate - \$580.85

Total - \$6,224.31

10. What does the local iwi intend to do with said turtle?

The rūnaka intend to bury the honu in accordance with their tikanga.

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us please contact either Frances Lawrence or Zoë Genet, at OIA@tepapa.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



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