



Cabinet Economic Development Committee

Minute of Decision

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Shared Approach to \$1.3 Billion in 'Jobs for Nature' Funding

Portfolios **Environment / Local Government / Agriculture / Biosecurity / Forestry / Regional Economic Development / Climate Change / Conservation / Land Information**

On 1 July 2020, the Cabinet Economic Development Committee:

Background

- 1 **noted** that \$1.1 billion for environment-related activity was funded in Budget 2020, as part of the government's COVID-19 recovery package, in addition to \$202 million also available for similar work (\$1.3 billion in total);
- 2 **noted** that Sustainable Land Use Ministers (SLU Ministers), being the Ministers for the Environment, Local Government, Agriculture, Biosecurity, Regional Development, Forestry, Climate Change, Conservation, and Land Information, have established a shared oversight approach for the \$1.3 billion available for environmentally-focused COVID-19 recovery purposes, under the name 'Jobs for Nature', as set out in Appendix 1 to the paper under DEV-20-SUB-0128;
- 3 **noted** that \$486 million of this funding has already been allocated to, or tagged to, existing programmes with established governance and decision-making structures, leaving \$818 million available for developing projects;
- 4 **noted** that \$687 million of the \$1.3 billion is currently still in contingency (\$433 million for Vote Environment, \$154 million for Vote Conservation, and \$100 million Vote Agriculture, Biosecurity, Fisheries and Food Safety), but is expected to be drawn down imminently, following the approval of Action Plans by the Minister of Finance and Ministers for the Environment, Conservation, and Agriculture and Biosecurity respectively;

Reference Group and secretariat

- 5 **noted** that a Reference Group comprising a mix of central government and non-central government members, plus an independent chair, supports SLU Ministers in having oversight and assurance of the whole programme;
- 6 **noted** that the Reference Group's role is to support SLU Ministers with strategic advice on the programme as a whole, including programme-level monitoring, reporting, and coordination, and that it is not a decision-making body;

- 7 **noted** that the non-central government members of the Reference Group were selected to encompass a broad range of perspectives (including from Māori landowners, regional councils, recovery experience, and NGOs), and are:

- 7.1 Doug Leeder (Independent Chair);
- 7.2 Mahina-a-rangi Baker;
- 7.3 Kevin Hague;
- 7.4 Dean Moana;
- 7.5 Rachel Brown;
- 7.6 James Palmer;
- 7.7 Dave Brash;
- 7.8 Alison Dewes;
- 7.9 Ewen Mathieson;

- 8 **noted** that a cross-agency secretariat (including some regional council secondees) supports the Reference Group, connecting to the all of government 'shop front', led by Employment, Education, and Training Ministers, that is being established for employment and training initiatives;

Shared approval process for funding available for projects that are still developing

- 9 **noted** that in respect of the funding available for projects that are still developing, SLU Ministers (supported by the Reference Group):

- 9.1 will agree principles, priorities, and overall phasing, framed by the Investment Statement (attached as Appendix 4 to the paper under DEV-20-SUB-0128);
- 9.2 until these matters are confirmed, will jointly approve individual projects of more than \$1 million, with approval for projects under \$1 million delegated to accountable agencies;

- 10 **noted** that the quantum of the delegation above will be reviewed after Ministers SLU have set principles, priorities, and overall phasing;

- 11 **noted** that \$486 million of already allocated or tagged funding will remain subject to existing decision making structures;

- 12 **noted** that some high-level indications of how funding available from Vote Environment is to be allocated beyond the initial quick-start phase (Phase 1) of the programme are:

- 12.1 Te Mana o Te Wai: s 9(2)(i) of the funding will be tagged for a Te Mana o Te Wai fund in Phase 2 of the overall programme (July to December 2020). This fund would allow Māori to access a dedicated pool of funding to ensure that Māori cultural values associated with freshwater can be addressed, s 9(2)(i)

- 12.2 s 9(2)(j) sitting alongside a new public contestable funding round of \$55 million for the Freshwater Improvement Fund, plus \$12 million allocated towards at-risk catchments;
- 12.3 on-farm actions: for Phase 3, at least \$100 million of the funding will be for additional actions on-farm, with a focus on sediment reduction. This would complement funding from other sources, and both in terms of geographic spread of actions and also the scope of actions, ie it could include any or all of mini-wetlands, sediment traps, tree planting on erodible land, and riparian planting;
- 13 **agreed** to the following changes to the eligibility and assessment criteria for the Freshwater Improvement Fund:
- 13.1 include assessment criteria to prioritise projects that contribute to recovery from COVID-19 through such things as, but not limited to, generating new employment and maintaining existing workforce capacity;
- 13.2 remove the eligibility criteria requiring a 50 percent funding contribution, and add a requirement that when funding projects with a government contribution greater than 50 percent, officials must be satisfied that the higher funding contribution is justified by COVID-19 recovery outcomes likely to be achieved;
- 14 **noted** that existing Freshwater Investment Fund assessment criteria already prioritise projects based on funding contributions;

Communications

- 15 **noted** that a joined-up communications approach is being developed for the Jobs for Nature programme to ensure different audiences are aware of and understand what funding is available to them, when it is available how to apply for it, and how the different components are part of a \$1.3 billion investment in jobs for environmentally focused initiatives;
- 16 **noted** that announcements relating to individual projects will be made by the responsible Minister or Ministers, unless agreed otherwise.

Janine Harvey
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Grant Robertson (Chair)
Hon Phil Twyford
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Iain Lees-Galloway
Hon Jenny Salesa
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Willie Jackson
Hon James Shaw
Hon Eugenie Sage

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for DEV