



Request that the Local Board require a genuine opportunity for community input into the Draft document for the Waiheke Island Destination Management Plan

Kia ora Board members

First, congratulations to each of you on your election to the Board. Project Forever Waiheke (PFW) looks forward to working with you again in 2023.

1. *We wish to voice major concerns at the processes used in the development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Waiheke Island.* In particular, we're disturbed at the evident failure of Stafford Strategy to consult adequately, genuinely or validly with the Waiheke community in relation to developing a DMP that will reflect diverse community views.
2. In particular, Stafford Strategy has:
 - Failed to give residents a genuine opportunity to take part in the initial community workshops in 2021, which were held at inaccessible times for the majority of employed Waiheke residents, and held during a very confined period
 - Reneged on its commitment to undertake a further round of community workshops in the development of the DMP, due to its budget having been exhausted (advice directly from the Stafford Strategy Project Lead for Waiheke)
 - Delayed the community survey by several months
 - Used survey promotion media that gave inconsistent advice about survey timing
 - Closed the survey before the Council panui had been delivered to all households
 - Completely failed in its promise to deliver a survey invitation to 'every household' on Waiheke. Evidence from more than 20 residents across the island, including people living in Onetangi, Surfdale, Ostend, Oneroa, Rocky Bay and Palm Beach, is that the survey flyers (an official Auckland Council panui on letterhead) were not delivered to letterboxes with a 'No junk mail' sign, thus effectively excluding conservation-minded residents from taking part in the community consultation; moreover, some residents who did receive the panui after PFW requested re-delivery did not have a genuine opportunity to take part, due to delivery of the flyer to some letterboxes on the morning of the day that the survey closed
 - Structured its online survey questions and response options in ways that bias responding towards supporting tourism growth rather than tourism management; these issues were fully canvassed in PFW's feedback to Stafford, but only some of the biases were removed in the final version of the survey online.
3. The Local Board has been copied on multiple communications over the past 17 months between PFW and Stafford where we have pointed out inadequacies in their community consultation and also supported them in our efforts to make those processes at least

minimally effective. We are aware that the Local Board has also been concerned about Stafford's DMP methodology.

4. PFW has already raised with both Stafford Strategy and the Local Board a broad range of problems with the methodology used by Stafford for the Waiheke community consultation for the DMP, both the survey and the limited scope and opportunities for attending the earlier community workshops. We have copied the Waiheke Local Board into all of those communications. It's evident that truly representative community input has been prevented due to Stafford's unwillingness to employ effective public participation methodologies.
5. In essence, PFW considers that the 'consultation' by Stafford with the Waiheke community has been completely inadequate, unprofessional, and consequently ineffective.
6. We have also raised concerns with the Local Board previously about the appropriateness of Auckland Unlimited having commissioned a DMP from an Australia-based tourism promotion company specialising in tourism promotion planning, and with very little prior expertise in destination *management* planning (that is, overtourism mitigation) before it was granted the contract. Nor was the commissioning process an open or competitive tender process.
7. PFW has also advised the Waiheke Local Board of the rejection by the Department of Conservation, and community groups in Arthur's Pass, of the DMP that Stafford Strategy developed for that location in 2021. We also understand that Dunedin City Council was underwhelmed by the DMP 'Refresh' developed by Stafford Strategy in 2021.
8. The initial project lead for the Waiheke DMP development has now advised that he has stepped down from that role. He advised that the Waiheke DMP document will be entirely designed and written by the Stafford Strategy Company Director, together with a Senior Associate, both based in Sydney, with no further input by the Waiheke Project Lead. To the best of our knowledge neither the Company Director nor the Senior Associate has ever visited Waiheke, and they undertook none of the data collection here. So there is no continuity, nor insight from first-hand experience, between data collection and DMP design and compilation, which reflects substandard and flawed practice in terms of both research and public participation.
9. PFW has also spoken recently to two representatives of [Destination Great Barrier Island](#) (DGBI). DGBI was acknowledged as key tourism stakeholders on Aotea Great Barrier Island (AGBI) for the DMP process and closely involved in the community consultation there. DGBI undertook a large part of the survey on behalf of Stafford. [The initial expectation of Stafford was that all survey responses could be made online, which posed a major access issue for many residents on AGBI. Stafford were unwilling to expand the survey medium due to budget constraints, so DGBI undertook a large proportion of the survey data collection and data entry.] They described the initial draft DMP delivered to the AGBI Local Board as 'embarrassing' and not reflective of the consultation input from either DGBI or the broad AGBI community. Despite an overwhelming preference voiced

by the AGBI community that the DMP to have a primary focus on *sustainable* tourism, explicitly to avoid the problems from over tourism that they had seen affect Waiheke, the initial draft DMP delivered by Stafford lacked any appropriate focus on sustainable tourism.

In addition, the DGBI Tourism Coordinator said that the input of key GBI stakeholders into the DMP is still “not presented significantly or referenced in the final draft version delivered by Stafford Strategy, who have now indicated that they consider the DMP to be in its final draft form”. Stafford have not been in direct contact with mana whenua in finalising the DMP document. Moreover, the Tourism Coordinator also commented that the initial draft DMP included significant “repeats and blatant inaccuracies that could quite easily be published if someone in the know doesn’t go through it page by page”, and needed comprehensive fact-checking and correction. At this point, DGBI and the AGBI Local Board are in further discussions with Auckland Unlimited (the Head of Visitor Economy, and the Destination Management and Sustainability Visitor Economy Lead) about how to rewrite and simplify sections of the DMP so that it does reflect the community’s input. Changes to the draft DMP are now being undertaken by Auckland Unlimited (not Stafford), though it is unclear whether Auckland Unlimited has any access to the survey data or other community consultation data, or the relevant capability to write a DMP. It is also unclear just how much the final Stafford draft can be changed without a complete re-write. The DGBI Tourism Coordinator said that DGBI welcome the opportunity to discuss the DMP experience on AGBI with the Waiheke Local Board, if wished.

10. Moreover, Auckland Unlimited had consistently advised DGBI and their Local Board that it would not be providing any funding for implementation of any aspect of the DMP.
11. In summary, PFW has major concerns that (i) the draft Waiheke DMP will not represent diverse Waiheke community views effectively or validly, and (ii) the broad Waiheke community has not had and likely will not have a genuine opportunity to engage in the ultimate shape and focus of the Waiheke DMP.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are based on PFW’s own concerns about the Waiheke DMP data collection process to date, together with recommendations from DGBI based on its unsatisfactory experience of the delivery of a draft DMP document for AGBI by Stafford Strategy.

We wish to recommend to the Board that it require Stafford Strategy and Auckland Unlimited, respectively as relevant, to:

- Re-engage the Stafford Project Lead for Waiheke to write or have a major role in writing the draft DMP for Waiheke, and reject any draft that does not include significant input by him
- Specify in the draft DMP document the ways in which it has taken into account diverse Waiheke stakeholder views

- Provide the Waiheke survey data to the Local Board, to undertake its own analysis of the data
- Provide a genuine opportunity, including a reasonable time frame and accessible forums, for the Waiheke community, including Project Forever Waiheke, to have input into the draft Waiheke DMP document
- Provide assurances that funding will be provided by Auckland Unlimited for an expert review of the various drafts of the Waiheke DMP to check and ensure the accuracy of claims of fact.

The DGBI Tourism Coordinator also suggested that it would be useful for the Waiheke Local Board members to refresh their own expectations of what a DMP should comprise, so that you have a standard by which to judge the Stafford product. Having the survey data would also be of value in that regard.

Respectfully, in the spirit of collaboration for the future wellbeing of the Waiheke community and natural environment.

Robin Kearns, Ivan Kitson, Pam Oliver, Peter Wills, Denise Wiremu
Project Forever Waiheke
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