

# Tū Mai Taonga

A Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea-led project


# 2023

## IMPACT REPORT

Transforming people  
and place on Aotea  
Great Barrier Island

*Prepared for the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust AGM - June 2024*





The purpose of Tū Mai Taonga is to create a pathway for taonga species to thrive on Aotea once again. Through careful planning and the dedicated work of a trained local workforce, this goal is within reach.

This Project is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for mana whenua to actively lead conservation on Aotea. It is made possible through funding from Predator Free 2050 Limited, the Department of Conservation, and Auckland Council.

Tū Mai Taonga is removing feral cats and rats from Aotea and is doing this in a holistic way to restore the mauri of te taiao.

The support of whānau and guidance of kaumātua support Tū Mai Taonga to fulfil our long-term vision of a thriving, predator-free Aotea.





# Chair's Message

A milestone partnership agreement with Auckland Council is signed. Left to right: Jeremy Warden, Terry Smith, Phil Brown (Auckland Council), Annette Lees (Facilitator), Opo Ngawaka, Paula Williams, Izzy Fordham, Marilyn Davies, Makere Jenner (Tū Mai Taonga).

## He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

This past year has taught us many lessons. Above all, how important it is to slow down and make sure we build a solid foundation.

Tū Mai Taonga is building one of the largest workforces on Aotea.

In 2023, Tū Mai Taonga spent \$1.46m on the island, \$1.3m of it on wages for project workers. Over 50% of the project workforce is mana whenua, many of whom have returned to the island.

We also saw months of rain and cyclones, which forced us to reevaluate our infrastructure and build safe and functional access and accommodation for our remote field teams.

We've looked after our workers, made headway with te taiao restoration and worked with the local and central government to assert our mana motuhake as mana whenua of Aotea.

We want to make a way for whānau to return home and begin to reclaim what has been lost. And that's not just about taonga species, it's

everything. Our language, our culture, our mātauranga. As we begin to reclaim these connections, we reclaim who we are as Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea.

The way forward for the iwi is to hold fast to the traditions of the past, restoring what can be restored, and to navigate modern technology and treaty partnerships to benefit the whole of Aotea: mana whenua, the community, and te taiao.



**Opo Ngawaka**  
*Chairperson*  
Tū Mai Taonga Project  
Steering Committee



## The numbers for 2023

127

landowner consultations  
carried out

61

formal qualifications  
earned

28,000

hours worked

\$1.46m

invested in Aotea

130

training sessions  
delivered

## The numbers to-date

60km

of access track created

30

local jobs  
created

24

project  
volunteers

90

monitoring cameras  
deployed

98%

of devices accessed  
only by foot

1,887

1,887 pest control devices installed



# The pathway to eradication



**Objective:** To remove feral cats and rodents from Aotea informed by the tikanga of Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea.

## Years 1-3

**Offshore northern islands - DISCOVER**  
(Customary, Crown, private and Māori land)  
Rodents - detect, eradicate, defend.

## Te Paparahi - PROVE

Rodents – apply learnings and trial tools at scale.  
Feral cats – eradicate.  
Build workforce capacity.

## Māori land blocks - MANAAKI

Apply tikanga across project.

## Years 3-5

**Okiwi Basin - INTEGRATE**  
Integrate with landowners and agency expertise and investment.

## Central - PARTNER

Partner with the conservation community.  
Create confidence in methods.

## Years 5-10

**South - EXTEND**  
Build informed landowner relationships.  
Enable joined-up eradication operations.

## Years 10-20

**TIAKI**  
Refine biosecurity to maintain an island ark.

*Mokopuna hear the birdsong their tupuna once did and people and wildlife thrive together.*



# Project Lead Message

## Tika and pono

Being Māori-led, this project needs to stand up to high scrutiny. The policies and procedures, especially regarding finances, need to be better than anyone else's.

It's not easy to work to a higher standard than is typically acceptable in a small project, but I have proudly seen the team rise to the challenge.

At the marae I report to the whānau that our financial processes are second-to-none; they know that the way funding is managed can make or break this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They are reassured by our hard work to save money wherever we can, spend with proper consideration, and provide decent wages to our kaimahi for the work they do.

Tika (right) and pono (integrity), are core values of the Tū Mai Taonga project.

We dispatch pest animals with humanity. They have their own mauri, worthy of respect and dignity.

The wairua with which we undertake this work will ultimately determine the success of the project. When we approach questions with the right intent, the answers come. When we are humble enough to recognise fault and make corrections, we build self-respect and earn the trust of our whānau and community.

We have amazing people, and this project would be nothing without each one of them bringing their best to the mahi, always learning and growing by challenging themselves and each other.

As we work together to heal our environment, we heal ourselves as a people. As a Māori-led project, our mahi is to ensure the hope we see in the eyes of our whānau and workers continues to burn bright.

**– Makere Jenner**  
*Project Lead*



Hiku Davis - Field Team lead

# Navigating the past – reframing the future

A Key component of this project is recognising and understanding the history of the whenua. For Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea, whakapapa is that holistic view that relates us back to Papatūānuku. That is the connection that mana whenua have to Aotea, to the ngāhere, to the moana, and to the other native species that call this place home.

For centuries mana whenua have held the tikanga throughout and around Aotea. That mātauranga is, and will continue to be, pivotal to the success of this project.

Hiku Davis was asked to act as guide for the Tū Mai Taonga project field teams, where he said he would provide *“whatever they need.”*

When navigating the whenua, Hiku knows exactly what to look for along planned trapping lines to keep wāhi tapu undisturbed and field crew safe. Subtle changes in vegetation and topography suggest a clearing and flattening for a pā site or hunting camp.

*“Most people see a hole in the ground, I see a kumara pit. You map it out and you start seeing other features like a terrace, have a look at the ground, give it a scratch and see charcoal, or maybe an obsidian flake.”* Hiku says.

*“What’s expected of me is to make sure these sites are left alone; these places are sacred, our people have lived and died here for generations.”*

He says the way Te Paparahi was used reflects the period before European arrival when the population around Aotearoa was growing and there was competition for resources.

*“They were almost nomadic, moving to the best muttonbirding or crayfishing areas according to the season.”*

As Field Team Lead, Hiku mentors crew in his quiet way, modelling a respectful, thoughtful work and way of being.

His role in the Tū Mai Taonga project has given kaumātua access to his assistance with other wāhi

and taonga tapu guidance. He is their eyes and ears in remote locations. Seabird and plant surveys as well as the formation of these new walking routes promise deeper understanding and connection to Aotea’s past.

Hiku provides guidance to agencies and workers and helps ensure agreements with kaumātua are honoured.







## Calling our people home

Whakapapa is one of the guiding principles for the work being undertaken by Tū Mai Taonga on Aotea. Reintroducing the tikanga of Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotearoa into how we care for the taiao has been a key priority, but so has providing an opportunity for whānau to reconnect with the whenua and moana.

Tū Mai Taonga has made a concerted effort in providing job opportunities for mana whenua. Training and skills development has been provided in the effort to support mana whenua to build conservation careers on the island. This project is focused on the relational healing of tangata, whenua, and moana.



*"I saw the opportunities and conversations happening about Tū Mai Taonga and I jumped on it. I'm glad I did. It's been a long time since we've been able to sit down all together as a whānau and to agree on this project. To me, it's a breakthrough. Our boys will be able to build their own home. I can see them wanting more for themselves and for their families, and for us all."*

– Karliina Wii



*"I didn't want a desk job, or to come back to New Zealand to work on the main island, but when I heard about field jobs with Tū Mai Taonga I was keen."*

*From whānau I'm learning about things like solar power systems and how to plant vege gardens. I'm loving working in the bush and finding out what makes me who I am."*

– Lindsey Davies



# Rats

## Broken Islands

Tū Mai Taonga has set out to remove rats from Rangīāhua, Little Māhuki, and Māhuki island. The lessons learned from these islands will help inform the approach taken on the much larger island, Aotea. The project set out to deploy comprehensive grid system on these outer islands, trialling two different baits - diphacinone on Māhuki and a mixture of diphacinone and cholecalciferol on Rangīāhua. Both baits are first generation anti-coagulants, which don't accumulate toxin in the environment. These trials will provide valuable insight into how rat eradication can be achieved on Aotea.

Huge success has been shown on Rangīāhua as the project has managed to set up a well-executed system of 25m<sup>2</sup> grids.

Māhuki on the other hand has shown to be a lot more difficult to implement a successful grid for baiting. This is due to the much harsher and steeper environment. The team has been working hard to navigate these challenges, with these lessons providing a valuable blueprint for the work that will be undergone on Aotea.

Skinks have seen a remarkable spike in activity since operations began, showing what can happen when rats are removed from an environment. In the first seven weeks of rat removal, rat numbers decreased from 50% to 7% detections, while reptile numbers increased from 2% to 43% detections. With sustained effort, rat detections were brought down to 0% across the deployed networks on these islands. If rat population across Aotea was decreased to 5% or less and sustained at that level, the most vulnerable species like kōkako could return and thrive.



*"This is an important project because it expands the range of methods that are available to us, as we work in different landscapes and communities around Aotearoa."*

– International eradication expert and technical advisor to the project Biz Bell



# Feral cats

*Te Paparahi*

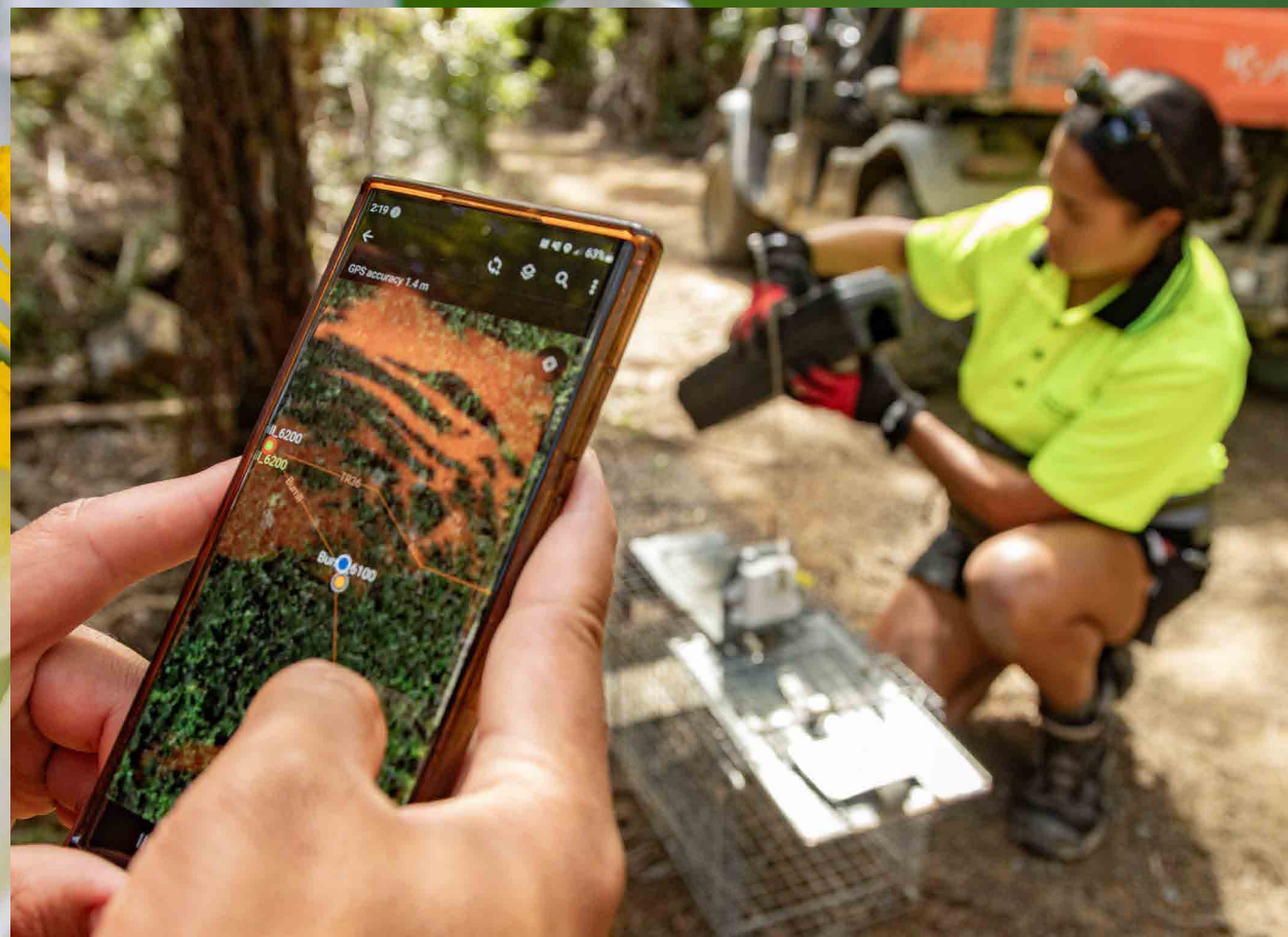
Feral cats have a devastating impact on the native wildlife populations on Aotea. Feral cats rely solely on what they can hunt as sustenance, unlike their domesticated relatives who are provided regular feedings. Removing feral cats will help restore native biodiversity and help reintroduce native species that have been lost.

The work of removing feral cats will occur in stages across 10 years, the first being in Te Paparahi. Te Paparahi is a distinct landscape in the Northern part of Aotea that is primarily uninhabited. It is the starting place of the ambitious

island-wide project, that has the potential to become the world's largest feral cat eradication on an inhabited island. The project is deploying remotely monitored traps into the home range of every feral cat in the 4,500ha block, where trail cameras show very high densities of feral cats. As success is proven, the traps will expand to the south of the island in stages.

While Te Paparahi has one of the lowest bird counts of anywhere

on the island, a recent survey has shown its invertebrate fauna such as wētā are largely intact, creating the building blocks for restoration. The island's long-tailed bat, pekapekatou-roa, is known to roost in the north. Relic populations of endangered seabirds, such as tākoketai, the black petrel, are likely to recover with the removal of feral cats and rats. Once an important food basket for birds such as kererū, mana whenua anticipate a thriving ancestral landscape.



*"Management of feral cats will most benefit ground-nesting birds like banded rail, waterbirds such as pāteke, ground-nesting seabirds, and the more-terrestrial lizards."*

– Feral cat expert and technical advisor to the project, John Parkes







Huts and access roading were constructed to ensure health and safety of workers after the wettest summer on record. 📷 Shaun Lee.

## Timeline

### January 2023

Preparation for feral cat knockdown begins and field teams undertake firearms training. Vital field equipment including trail camera network, radio communications, and materials for island rat eradication is procured. Health, Safety, Environment, and Wellbeing review is completed, and project social media channels launched. Severe weather impacts on operations.

### February 2023

Cyclone Gabrielle hits, and operations pivot from network set-up to infrastructure repair and improvement. Islands Rat Eradication programme is granted permission to start trials and updates are given to kaumātua Taumata.

### March 2023

Case for regional impact made to to Auckland Council. 400K Ngā Matārae – 490K total. New recruitment sees the team more than double, growing from 12 to 28 staff. Severe weather continues to impact operations.

### April 2023

Tū Mai Taonga presents to Head of Department of Conservation, Penny Nelson. New monitoring cameras are installed in Te Paparahi, now totaling 56.

### May 2023

New recruits are trained in bio-hygiene to mitigate kauri dieback risk while trapping. Repairs and retrofit of shared project headquarters to reflect iwi dignity and commitment to Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea work. Radio New Zealand Sharon Brett-Kelly’s podcast features Tū Mai Taonga project and its groundbreaking mana whenua led approach.

### June 2023

New field team leads are appointed, Tū Mai Taonga presents to Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea beneficiaries, Predator Free Taitokerau quarterly hui.

### July 2023

Remote monitoring installation begins, and island baseline monitoring is completed.

### August 2023

The first quarterly Tū Mai Taonga team hui takes place. Feral cat knockdown goes live in south east Te Paparahi while rat knockdowns on Rangiāhua, Little Māhuki and Māhuki islands begin.

### September 2023

Success as monitoring shows significant pre and post knockdown results in the rat programme. More than 30 workers have now been recruited to the project. Planning for the future funding of the project starts to take shape, with medium and long-term goals and funding outlined.

### October 2023

Conversations with new prospective funders take place. Tū Mai Taonga meet with owners of Māori land blocks at Motairehe Marae to get permissions for Te Paparahi.

### November 2023

A milestone partnership agreement with Auckland Council is signed. Presentations are delivered to Auckland Council’s Planning, Environment and Parks Committee, and the Ecology Festival, Tū Mai Taonga coverage goes global with a feature in a German newspaper. Kerryn Johnson is appointed new manager of the Rat Eradication Programme, and 11 crew members are flown to Auckland to progress drivers’ licenses.

### December 2023

External audit gets underway for the Island Rat Eradication programme. ‘The Tū Mai Taonga Story’ promotional video is released and picked up by national news with a Christmas Day feature on Newshub.



# Looking ahead



## Redefining partner relationships

Tū Mai Taonga is building new relationships and partnerships that redefine the basis of mana whenua involvement in conservation activities on Aotea.

In 2023, a new partnership was forged with Auckland Council to secure funding, jobs, and a once-in-a-generation opportunity for mana whenua to actively lead operations.

Discussions with Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea helped redefine foundational relationships with key figures at agencies such as Te Papa Atawhai, Department of Conservation including Director General Penny Nelson. This has resulted in community agreement and partnership engagement to support the project going forward.

This new way of working provides the basis for mana whenua leadership and involvement in ensuring Aotea's indigenous fauna and flora survives and thrives.



## Taking care with new approaches

Tū Mai Taonga aims to prove new operational approaches on Aotea that work at scale.

The cat eradication operation across Te Paparahi, backed by new remote monitoring and mapping tools, is one of the largest feral cat removal operations undertaken in New Zealand.

Work on Rangiahua and Māhuki replicates other successful operations that use first-generation anticoagulant toxins. It seeks to prove that this approach can effectively protect these islands so that indigenous biodiversity can return.



## Healthy Whānau

Tū Mai Taonga will continue to invest in opportunities that allow whānau to return home, reclaim their identity, and their history. The project's holistic approach is about more than protecting taonga species, it's everything.

Applying the principle of whakapapa will see the return of ancestral peoples as kaitiaki of the taonga species of Aotea. This project is delivered in a way that will help restore generational language, culture, and mātauranga.

The island's future relies on reviving traditions of the past. Utilising and navigating modern technology and treaty partnerships will benefit and enrich Aotea's ancestral whānau, wider community, natural environment, and ecology.



## Growing Leaders

The success of the project will be measured by the growth of our youngest, most vulnerable employees. Tū Mai Taonga is growing a new generation of leaders on Aotea, fostering new skills and instilling within them a sense of pride, identity and belonging through the work.

In providing a meaningful role and a stake in the island's future, Tū Mai Taonga's workforce is fertile ground from which new leaders are emerging from all levels of the project. The workers featured in this report are answering the call from their homeland, and taking on the responsibility and opportunities the project offers.

These leaders will go forward with hard-won knowledge and bush skills inherited and learned from their elders, who now have the opportunity to share their insight to the next generation.

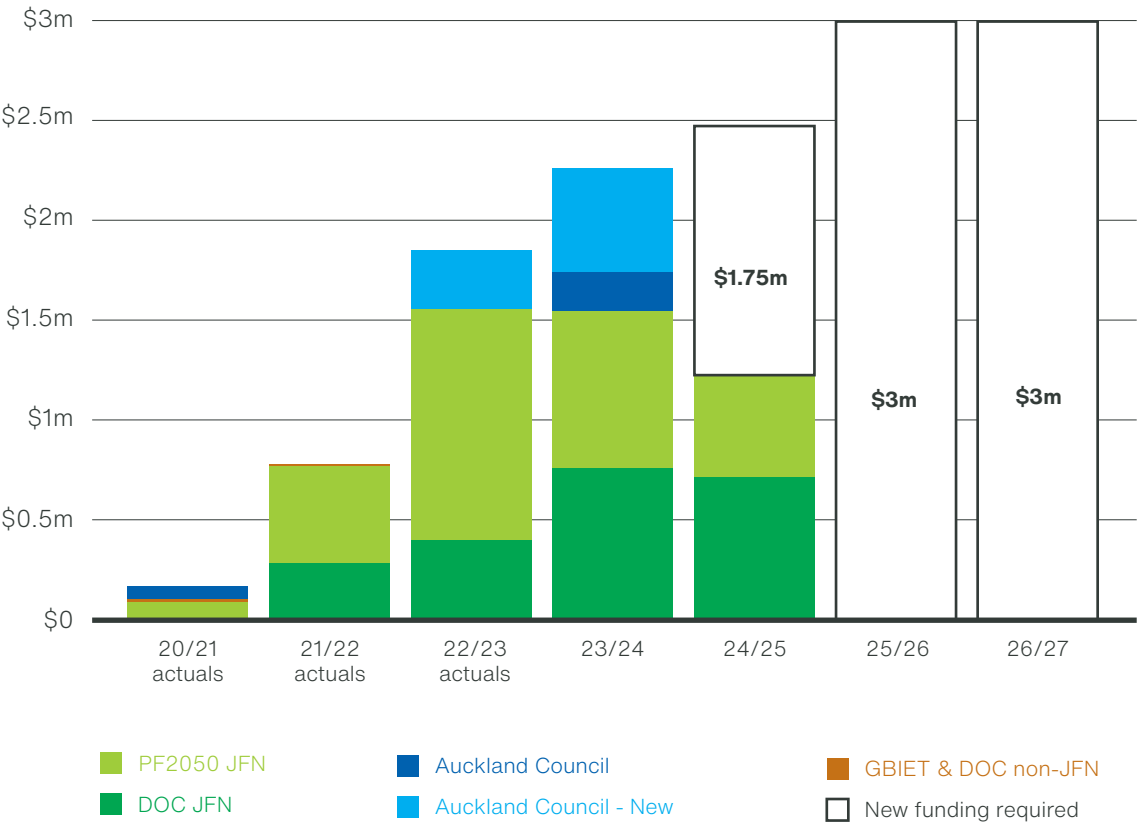


# Financials



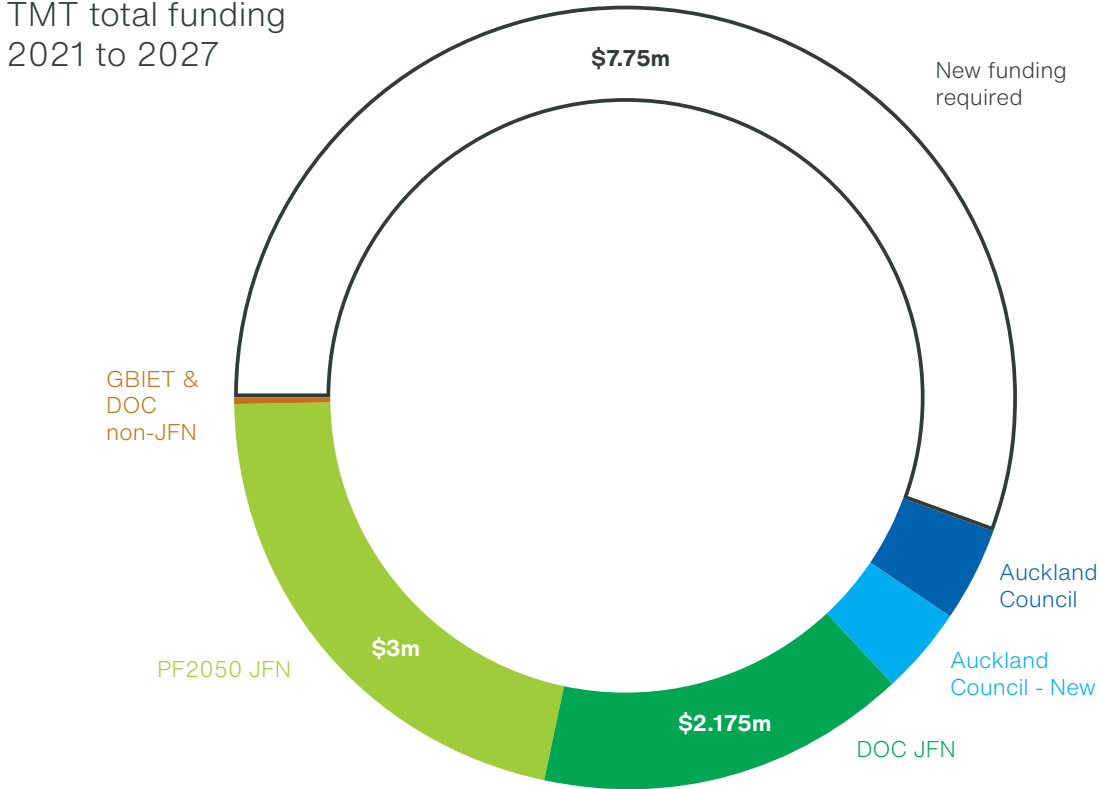
“This is the project the island has been waiting for; a genuine opportunity for mana whenua to lead a significant project that will determine the islands future.” – Izzy Fordham

TMT funding by year and source to June 2027  
Including new funding required (\$)



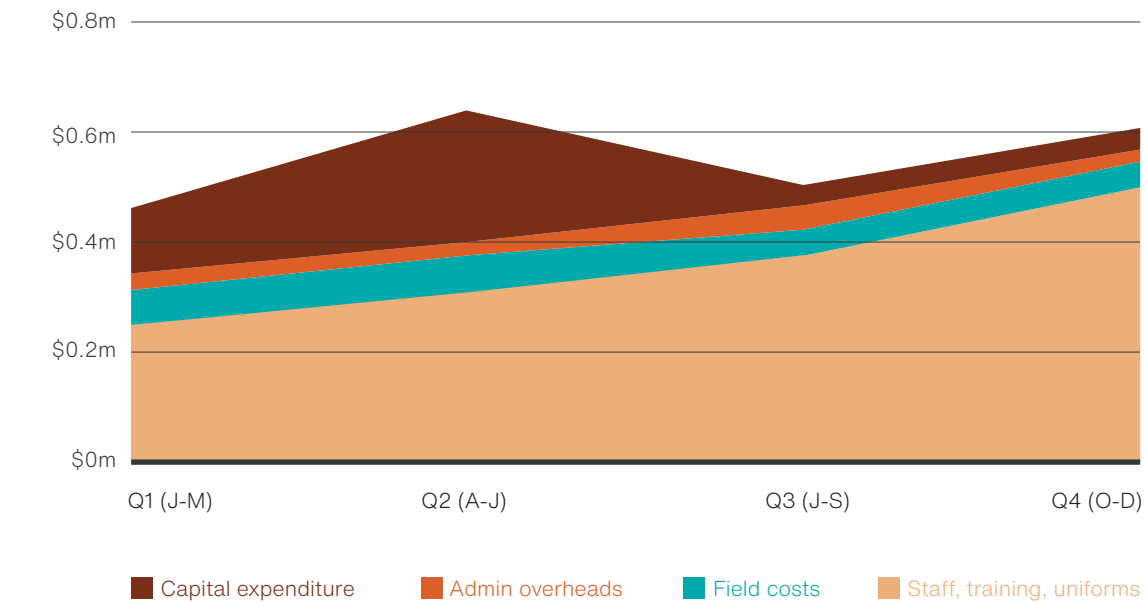
“I have been delighted to see new leadership emerging among mana whenua stepping up to take on the challenges that this project entails” – Sue Daly

TMT total funding  
2021 to 2027



“As steering committee members, we are at the service of the Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Iwi Trust Board adding our methods and skills to ensure their success” – Kate Waterhouse

2023 expenditure per quarter





# Cash Position - Tu Mai Taonga Project

Ngati Rehua-Ngati Wai ki Aotea

For 12 months to 31st December 2023

Account	Jan 2023-Dec 2023
<b>Income</b>	
TMT - DoC JFN Funding	623,000
TMT - PF2050 Funding	1,130,000
TMT - Auckland Council Funding	440,000
TMT - In kind Co-funding Income (Book entry only)	1,036,052
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,229,052</b>
<b>Operational Costs</b>	
TMT - Admin, IT & Governance Work - Contractors	533,683
TMT - Field Operations - Vehicle and Travel Costs	12,094
TMT - Field Operations - Hireage & Rental Costs	78,381
TMT - Field Operations - Other Misc Field Costs	43,450
TMT - Field Operations - Supplies & Materials	67,096
TMT - Field Work - Contractors	821,539
TMT - Other Personnel costs incl Employer Kiwisaver etc	17,881
TMT - Personnel protective equipment & uniforms	52,839
TMT - Training	28,651
TMT - In kind Co-funding Expense (Book entry only)	1,036,052
<b>Total Operational Costs</b>	<b>2,691,665</b>
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	<b>537,387</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	
TMT - Interest Income	805
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>805</b>
<b>Overheads</b>	
TMT - Accounting	195
TMT - Bank Fees	181
TMT - Communications & Engagement Expenses	8,485
TMT - Entertainment	2,951
TMT - Freight & Courier	31,972
TMT - Governance and Board Expenses	2,037
TMT - Insurance	9,987
TMT - Light, Power, Heating	603
TMT - Office Expenses	12,047
TMT - Professional fees-Eg. Legal fees, consultancy survey etc	10
TMT - Repairs and Maintenance (Non Field)	37,433
TMT - Telephone, Internet & IT Services (Non Field)	5,388
TMT - Travel - National	13,327
<b>Total Overheads</b>	<b>124,617</b>
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>413,576</b>



“In 2023, over 70% of our total expenditure was spent on wages and services provided by our local Aotea community”

– Dave Braddock, Tū Mai Taonga Finance Manager

© Shaun Lee

<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	
TMT - Buildings & Fitout	32,211
TMT - Computer Equipment	5,320
TMT - Field Equipment	295,463
TMT - Office Equipment	2,847
TMT - Vehicles	92,146
<b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>427,986</b>

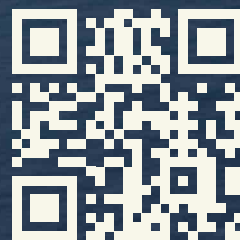
<b>Cash Position</b>	
Bank Account	417,657
Plus Accounts Receivable	463,004
Less Current Liabilities	(384,328)
<b>Funds available</b>	<b>496,332</b>





Field teams service 98% of the pest control devices on foot, following trapping lines through diverse terrain. 📷 Shaun Lee.





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