

# In Situ

Heritage Ltd

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10 JUL 2006

TAURANGA

5 July 2006

s 7(2)(f)(ii)

Private Bag 12022  
TAURANGA

Dear s 7(2)(f)(ii)

## Re: Mauao Historic Reserve base track surfacing

In April this year I had a telephone call from s 7(2)(f)(ii) in which we discussed the Tauranga City Council proposal to resume using shell as the track surfacing material on the base track at Mauao Historic Reserve. I explained my concerns regarding the proposal, and recommended that Tauranga City Council obtain specialist advice regarding the most suitable material for the track surface before making any decision. Glenn recently advised me that, although the track specialist had recommended a material other than shell, the Steering Group is in favour of using shell, and that is the direction Tauranga City Council will be following.

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asked me if I would be prepared to assist the council with the preparation of an application to the Historic Places Trust. I have declined involvement in the project for ethical reasons, and I believe that it is important that you understand the reasons why I have made that decision.

Mauao is an exceptional place. The archaeological and cultural landscape is of outstanding value. The archaeological sites; in particular the extensive use of shell to create artificial living surfaces, the volume and complexity of the shell middens, and the extensive flattened areas which are suggestive of marae atea, are features which elevate the archaeological significance of Mauao. The on-going links that tangata whenua have with Mauao, and its complex cultural history are also aspects of exceptional value. In addition, the setting, ease of public access and the protected status of the reserve are all factors which add to the values of the place. The fact that Tauranga City Council has completed a conservation plan for the reserve, and is implementing the recommendations of that plan is also an aspect that is, unfortunately, still rare in the management of archaeological landscapes in New Zealand.

During the preparation of the conservation plan for Mauao one of the aspects you asked me to consider was the possibility of Mauao being proposed for nomination as a World Heritage site. This was contained as a recommendation of the conservation plan, and I am still of the opinion that a nomination could easily be justified. The Department of Conservation is currently assessing nominations as part of the process of developing New Zealand's indicative list to be presented to the World Heritage Committee. That list will contain heritage places that New Zealand intends to nominate for World Heritage status.

The World Heritage Committee assesses nominations on the basis of a series of criteria. The criteria are related to outstanding universal value. The place must also meet the conditions of authenticity and/or integrity, and have adequate legal protection.

The area where a nomination for Mauao is most likely to have some weakness relates to the question of integrity. Although the majority of the place is intact, the previous use of shell as a track surfacing material has contaminated shell middens in the vicinity of any area where that shell was deposited. This means that any radio-carbon date or faunal information relating to the history of human occupation of Mauao, derived from those middens would be unreliable.

The integrity problem could be dealt with in a World Heritage nomination by explaining that the use of shell as a track surfacing material was a previous reserve management practice which was ceased because it was inappropriate.

I am very concerned, therefore, by the proposal to recommence using shell as a track surfacing material. Doing so would be contrary to the recommendation of the conservation plan as well as being contrary to the principles of the Reserves Act.

Mauao is a historic reserve, vested under the Reserves Act. That act requires that historic reserves are managed in a manner that recognises the historic value as the primary value being managed. No other use of the reserve, such as recreational use, should be permitted to compromise that primary value.

There needs to be a compelling reason to contradict both the conservation plan and the Reserves Act. To date, no compelling argument has been presented. Tauranga City Council has received specialist advice on the best track surface material. It appears the council is also prepared to ignore that advice.

I urge you to reconsider the decision to resume use of shell as a track surfacing material at Mauao.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]  
s 7(2)(a) - Privacy

cc.

[Redacted]  
s 7(2)(f)(ii)

[Redacted]  
s 7(2)(a) - Privacy