



Briefing requested by the Minister of Conservation

Date:	26 August 2015	File ref:	Science and Policy Group	DOCCM	2584319
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Minister of Conservation

Subject:	BATTLE FOR OUR BIRDS REVIEW
Action Sought:	For noting
Deadline:	

Paper Type: (Cabinet, Statutory or Other)		Dept's Priority: (Very High, High, Normal or Low)	Low
Risk Assessment: (e.g. possible negative reactions/consequences)		Level of Risk: (High, Medium or Low)	Low

Contacts for telephone discussion (if required)				
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Executive Summary

The Battle for our Birds (BfoB) 2014 beech mast response saw DOC plan and carry out an unprecedented 27 aerial pest control operations between August 2014 and February 2015. We successfully covered more than 600,000 hectares of conservation land.

The Department has now completed a process to review how this programme ran and to capture lessons that can be applied to future beech mast events or other programmes of this scale. You have requested a briefing on this review.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that you–

		Refer to paragraph	Minister's decision
(a)	Note the contents of this briefing		(yes / no)
(b)	Note the attached BfoB review report		(yes / no)

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Bruce Parkes
DD-G Science and Policy
for Director-General

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Honourable Maggie Barry ONZM
Minister of Conservation

1. Purpose

To brief you on the BfoB review recommendations and findings.

2. Background

We have now completed a review of how the BfoB programme ran and captured lessons we can apply to future beech mast events or other programmes of this scale. This review has been received and approved for implementation by the Deputy Director General Operations. A copy is attached. (Note it is a powerpoint document, as this was what was requested by the DD-G Operations).

You have requested a briefing on this review.

3. Key findings of the review.

- Overall the beechmast response was a success, with outstanding commitment from staff at all levels of the organisation. However, the scale of the programme (4 times the normal annual program) put considerable workload pressure on many people.
- Key national roles were put in place to support communications, logistics/procurement and operations for the campaign. These worked well when they were put in place early and appropriately resourced, but some key support areas (such as geospatial services) were initially missed in planning.
- There was room for improvement in how we communicated and coordinated within DOC – across teams, locations and functions. This led to some duplication of effort, inefficiencies and missed opportunities. Having a programme manager in place, overseeing the different strands of work, could have improved communication and coordination.
- We need to keep working on the science behind the beech mast – there are still some areas where we need to build our understanding, including the relationship between predators and mice, and the impacts/management of masts in alpine environments. Monitoring and research needs to be integrated as a core part of future campaigns.
- The external communications strategy worked well: keeping the focus on species rather than poison, using nationally consistent brochures and messages, and having open engagement with media, stakeholder groups and communities. The media and design teams were involved early and were able to achieve high profile coverage of the anticipated mast and its potential effects on native species, which was backed up with targeted local media coverage and community engagement. This helped secure higher levels of public support than we would normally see or expect for aerial 1080.
- Extensive consultation about the BfoB was a strength identified by the review. The improved project management recommended by the review will facilitate still better consultation on individual 1080 operations and the programme as a whole.

4. Recommendations that came out of the review.

Three overarching recommendations were put forward to the DD-G Conservation Operations:

1. Establish a formalised structure to manage all future aerial 1080 operations, including business-as-usual operations and future mast events. If accepted, this structure would appoint a national Landscape Pest Programme Leader to oversee all aerial 1080 operations and ensure coordinated national support for areas like logistics, procurement, planning and communication.

2. The review report identifies a number of detailed recommendations for management of future operations and mast events. It is recommended that each of these be considered and followed up as appropriate.
3. The operational debrief reports written by Conservation Services Managers and local teams contain a wealth of information that will be useful in guiding local planning and delivery of future aerial 1080 operations. Summarising these findings was out of scope for the review team, but it was recommended these findings are collated and used to drive improvement.

5. Cost Implications

The recommended improvements to programme management can be done within existing allocation. While using existing programme management resources in a different way is cost neutral, this should not be confused with the Department's commitment to increase the area treated. Increasing the area under control will increase cost, requiring reallocation within Vote: Conservation.

6. Consultation

The review was about better project management within DOC. External consultation about the review itself is not required.

7. Section 4 Conservation Act

The improvements to project management will strengthen meeting our obligations under section 4.

8. Risk Assessment

N/A this briefing is for you to note only

9. Legislation

N/A

10. Attachments

Attached is the BfoB review report.

ENDS