Save Our Reserves Press Release

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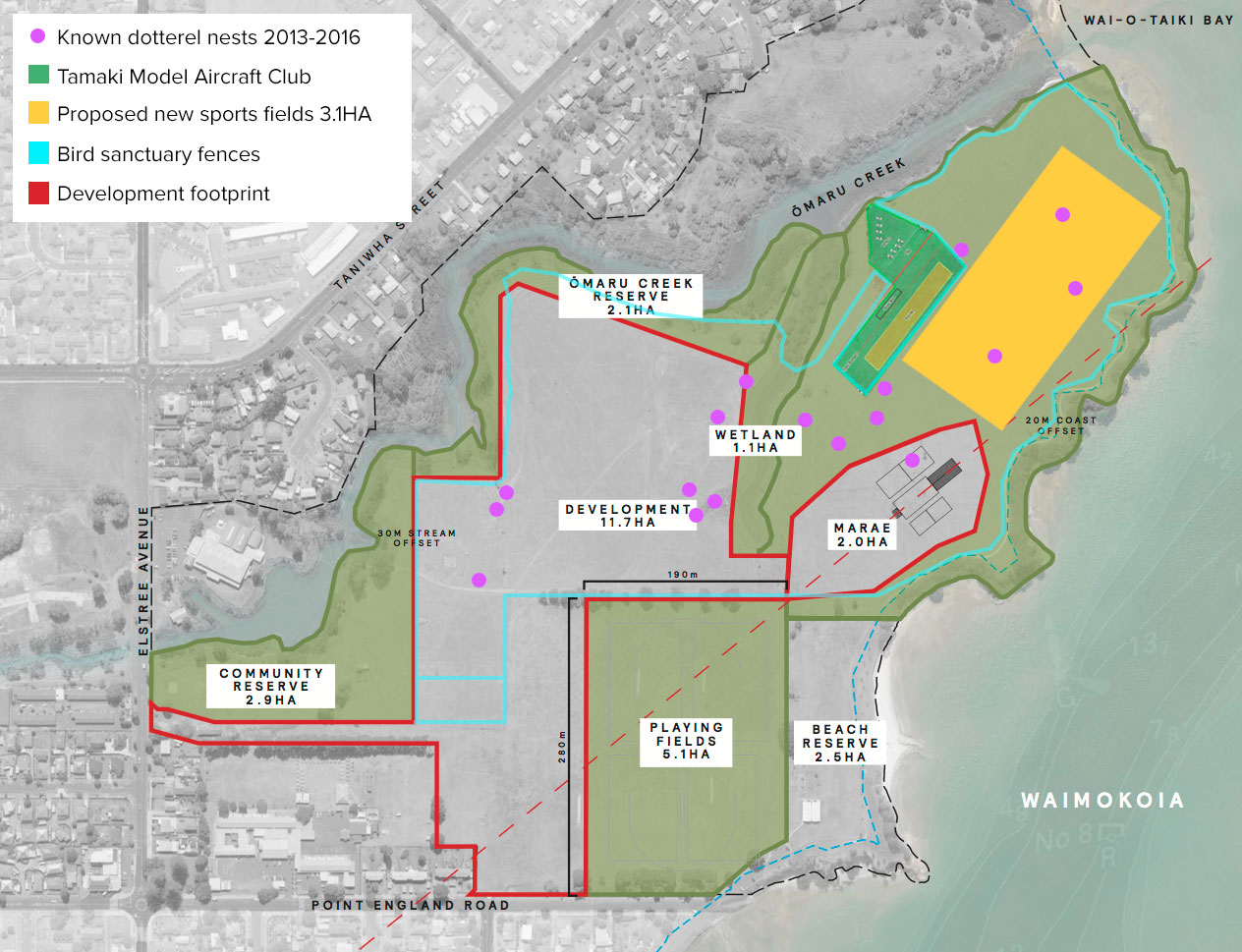
**Conservation Minister silent on habitat destruction**

Conservation Minister Maggie Barry proudly promoted DOC’s draft ‘New Zealand’s Threatened Species Strategy’ during the Budget debate this week. The strategy aims to “halt decline and restore healthy, sustainable populations of native species”. Yet emails to Minister Barry regarding endangered birds affected by the Point England Development Enabling Bill are being re-directed to Nick Smith, Minister of Building and Construction because the issues raised apparently fall within his portfolio.



*Conservation dependant Northern New Zealand dotterel chick at Point England. Photo credit: Shaun Lee*

Does Minister Barry not consider the Northern New Zealand dotterel, the ‘Nationally Critical’ shore plover or other endangered shorebirds that roost in the Point England Bird Sanctuary part of her portfolio? Has she advocated not proceeding with the habitat destruction that this Bill entails? Is she concerned that Nick Smith’s latest proposed amendment see sports fields triumph over nesting sites for ‘At Risk’ native birds? Is she at all concerned that the removal of cattle and fences will make it impossible for dotterel to breed at Point England?



*Point England Reserve development proposal showing newly proposed sports fields in addition to the housing development, both where dotterel breed, and the fence that has protected them to date.*

We don’t know because the Minister has been silent on the Bill and refuses to personally acknowledge, let alone engage in, correspondence over the plight of these birds.

Dotterel and shore plover are conservation dependent species and “that requires the support and collaboration of landowners” says the strategy - but what if the landowner is the Crown and it is the Crowns actions that are threatening further species decline?

Northern New Zealand dotterel populations are slowly recovering because of community led efforts like those of the Point England Bird Sanctuary including predator control and active management during the breeding season to minimise disturbance from human activities.

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*Two 'Nationally Critical' shore plover at Point England. Photo credit: Shaun Lee*

“Success requires that we face the difficult and contentious challenges head on, rather than avoid them. It means being open, frank and honest about the impacts on our native species, and working together to find innovative ways to protect them”. Save Our Reserves would like the Government to be open and honest and provide the conservation leadership promised in the strategy. We would like to work together to protect the native birds at Point England Reserve and don’t think the innovative solution is to build houses and sports fields over their nesting sites. Dotterel are site faithful, generally only moving their nest site meters each year.

Point England is the primary roost site for the shorebirds of the Tāmaki Estuary. These include shore plover, white-faced herons, royal spoonbill, South Island pied oystercatchers, variable oystercatchers, New Zealand dotterel, banded dotterel and pied stilts.

Will Minister Barry advocate for these birds when the Point England Development Enabling Bill is debated in its final stages next week? Surely it is more cost efficient for the tax payer to avoid actions that precipitate native species decline than expensive last ditch efforts because of short-sighted and ill-informed Government legislation?

Strategies in glossy colour do not in themselves protect our native species. Evidence-based decision making and common sense rather than election year politicking would be a good start.

Save Our Reserves would like Minister Barry to provide scientific evidence demonstrating that building houses and sports fields on a rare urban roosting and breeding site on the Tāmaki Estuary is good practice and supportive of “healthy, sustainable populations of native species”.

Ends

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