

From: [Allie Dunn](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Response to Official Information Request re Operational Costs of Dannevirke Deer Park
Date: Monday, 11 May 2026 9:06:00 am
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
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[Deer Park Map.pdf](#)
[Report to Council - Dannevirke Deer Park.pdf](#)
[Condition of Deer Park Fencing.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)
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[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)

Kia ora

I am writing in response to your official information request dated 7 May 2026 regarding the operational costs of the Dannevirke Deer Park over the past ten years. Our officers have not been able to fully complete the historical cost data for the past ten years at this stage; however, they have captured the majority of the operational expenses that are directly attributable to the Deer Park.

What has not yet been included are the staff costs associated with managing the deer, which will require further work to quantify.

To ensure you have information available ahead of the upcoming community meeting, we have provided a summary of the operational expenditure for the past five years in the table below (excluding staff / overhead costs).

Dannevirke Deer Park Expenditure

Operational Expenditure	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
General Maintenance (mowing & spraying, minor tree works, storm cleanup vandalism cleanup, pest control, plumbing)	\$7,105.41	\$928.91	\$2,631.63	\$171.34	-
Vet Services	-	-	-	\$427.22	-
Fencing Repairs – General	-	\$194.58	\$2,143.00	-	-
Stock Feed	\$913.75	\$1,061.12	\$1,451.56	\$1,344.02	\$767.39

Total Operational Expenses	\$8,019.16	\$2,184.61	\$6,226.19	\$1,942.58	\$767.39

Staff Costs / Overheads – not yet included

Capital Expenditure	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total	-	-	-	-	-

Our officers have recently received a number of enquiries about the future of the Deer Park.

A common theme has been a misunderstanding that decommissioning the Deer Park would result in the closure of the entire Lower Domain. To help address this, we have attached a diagram showing the specific land area currently occupied by the Deer Park. You are welcome to use this at the community meeting to help provide clarity and reduce any misconceptions.

We have also included images of the perimeter fencing, which is in poor condition and would require significant capital investment to bring up to standard. This issue was outlined in the reports presented to the Dannevirke Community Board on 20 April 2026 and to the Tararua District Council on 29 April 2026. A copy of the report considered by Council at their April meeting is attached for your reference.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi



Allie Dunn | Manager Democracy Services | Deputy Electoral Officer

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THE NEXT 10 YEARS: LONG TERM PLAN 2027 - 2037

Budget Challenge

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Please return to the sender and delete your copy. Thank you.

From: Allie Dunn

Sent: Thursday, 7 May 2026 8:04 am

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: CM: Acknowledgement - Official Information Request re Operational Costs of Dannevirke Deer Park

Mōrena [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information about the operational costs for the Dannevirke Deer Park. I'm writing to confirm that we've received it.

We understand you're hoping to have this information ahead of the public meeting next week. We'll do our best to meet that timeframe, and we'll be in touch if it looks like we won't be able to provide the full response in time.

As part of our commitment to openness and accountability, we now proactively publish requests for information—and the responses to them—on our website. When we do this, we make sure to follow the requirements of the Privacy Act 2020 and remove any personal or identifying details before anything is made public.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Ngā mihi



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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 7 May 2026 6:15 am
To: Allie Dunn <Allie.Dunn@Tararuadc.govt.nz>
Subject: CM: Official Information Request
Importance: High

EXTERNAL EMAIL ALERT: Caution advised. This message is from an external sender. Verify the sender's identity and use caution with attachments and links.

Good morning Allie

I would like to make an official information request please for the following:

- breakdown by year of all operational costs for the Deer Park for the last 10 years (2015-2025)
(if 10 years is not easily accessible can we start with the most recent 5 years (2020-2025) and do the older years next

Do you need anything further from me at this stage?

I am hoping we can get this pretty quickly as I am part of a group exploring what can be done next and we have a public meeting next week.

If there is likely to be delays can we try for just the last year (2025) as soon as possible

Warmest Regards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Area Occupied by Deer Park at Dannevirke Lower Domain

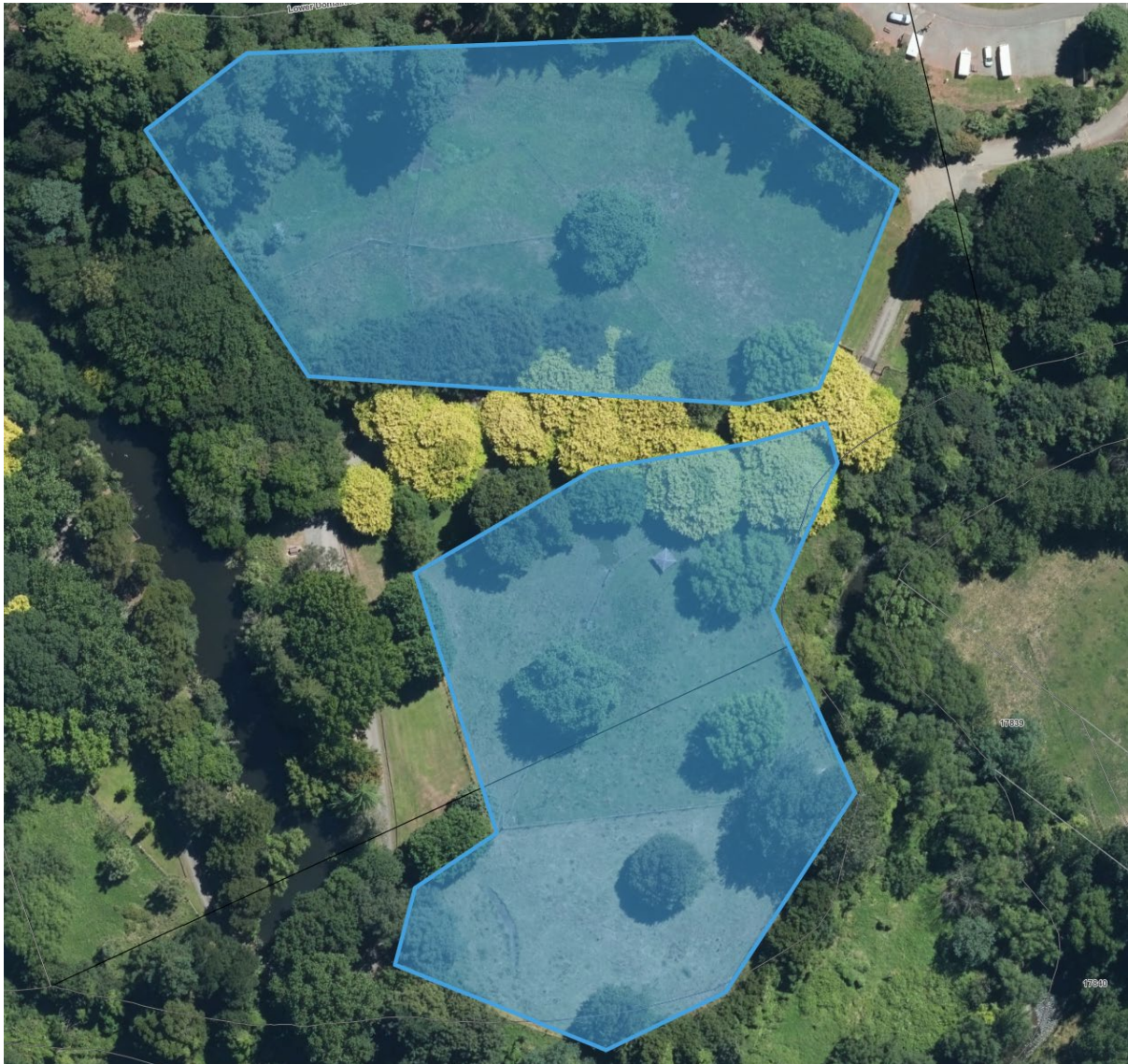
Lower Domain View:



**Wide view of approximate area occupied by the deer park within the Lower Domain.

Area Occupied by Deer Park at Dannevirke Lower Domain

Deer Park View:



**Approximate area occupied by the Deer Park.



Report

Date : 23 April 2026
To : Mayor and Councillors
Tararua District Council
From : Fontayne Chase
Facilities Manager
Subject : **Dannevirke Domain Deer Park**
Item No : **10.3**

Recommendation

- 1.1 *That the report from the Facilities Manager dated 19 March 2026 concerning the Dannevirke Domain Deer Park be received.*
- 1.2 *That the Tararua District Council provide direction to the Facilities Manager how to proceed with management of the Dannevirke Deer Park or;*
- 1.3 *That the Tararua District Council approves to decommission the Deer Park and;*
- 1.4 *That the Tararua District Council approves the decommissioning process indicated in section 5 – Decommission Process*

2. Reason for the Report

- 2.1 This report is to inform and seek direction from Council to decommission the Dannevirke Deer Park.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Deer Park is located in the Lower Domain, Dannevirke, for the enjoyment of the community and visitors to the park.
- 3.2 It was established in 1969 when the Council set aside the area as a deer park in terms of Section 49 (1) (a) of the Reserves and Domains Act 1953 with approval from the Commissioner of Crown Lands.

- 3.3 The Dark house – Deer shed, was added to the facility in 1990 and built by the Ruahine Work Trust.
- 3.4 The land parcel occupied by the deer park is classified Recreation Reserve.
- 3.5 The Dannevirke Deer Park has a registered National Animal Identification and Tracing number (NAIT). The NAIT is New Zealand’s system for tracking cattle and deer. The system is essential for biosecurity, disease control, and food safety enabling traceability of animal movements.
- 3.6 Stock numbers were reduced in 2021 from nine animals to five. Four Hinds and 1 trophy stag have been in resident up until 2025 season when the birth of four fawns occurred on site.
- 3.7 The deer park occupies a land size of approximately 1.84 hectares consisting of the following assets: approximately 615m perimeter fencing (including gates), additional internal fencing, gates, 6 troughs, 1x Dark House and 1 x Fixed Shelter and numerous large trees.
- 3.8 The deer have been cared for by a casual contractor on a part time basis since October 2018, who is now looking to retire.
- 3.9 The activity is managed under the Parks and Reserves budget and has the following legislative requirement:
- Reserve Act 1977
 - Animal Welfare Act 1999
 - Biosecurity Act
 - Biosecurity – National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Plan Order 1998
 - National Animal Identification and Tracing Act 2012
- 3.10 No upgrades are recorded for the deer park in the past 5 years.

4. Reason for Decommissioning

- 4.1 **Animal Welfare:** Deer are sentient animals capable of experiencing emotions, perceptions, and sensations that are meaningful to them. Their welfare is not only an ethical obligation but a legal one, requiring a high standard of care as outlined in the Code of Welfare for Deer.
- 4.1.1 The primary responsibility for ensuring this welfare lies with the owner and every person in charge of the animals (PICA). Under the Animal Welfare Act, this includes legal accountability for employers, company directors, and officers — not just those directly handling the animals.

4.1.2 Effective care demands:

- Expertise in animal husbandry
- Empathy and respect for animal behaviour and needs
- Skill in observation and handling
- Compliance with legal standards, including:
 - Mandatory tagging of all deer by 180 days of age or before movement off-farm
 - Permanent identification through the NAIT (National Animal Identification and Tracing) system

Failure to meet these standards can result in legal consequences and reputational risk.

4.2 **Physical Environment:** The area set aside for the deer park is in Fair condition however, investment in the near future is required to meet pastoral and water quality standards and fencing improvements.

4.3 **Condition Assessment:**

4.3.1 Projected replaced cost of 3m x 1000m deer fencing will require \$240,000 investment spread across a 5 year renewal program. Below is the project investment level required for the next LTP.

Asset Description:	Condition	Life expectancy	Renewal Cost estimates	Renewal Cost estimate	Renewal Cost estimate	Renewal Cost estimate	Renewal Cost estimate
			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Boundary fence 615m	Fair - Poor	6 years	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$30,000		
Internal fencing	Good	6 years				\$20,000	\$25,000
Perimeter gates	Good	10 years	\$5,000-\$8,000	\$5,000-\$8,000			
Internal gates	Good	10 years				\$7,000 - \$9,000	\$7,000 - \$9,000
Water troughs x 6	Good	15 years					\$5,000
Buildings 1 Dark House Built by the Ruahine Work Trust 1990	Average	10 years				\$2,000	
Building 2 Shelter	Average	5 years			\$3,000		

Drainage	Poor			\$5,000	\$10,000		
Signage	Good						
NAIT Compliance	Current						
Tree Assets	Fair - Poor		\$30,000		\$10,000		\$2,500
Total Cost			\$105,000- \$108,000	\$90,000- \$93,000	\$53,000	\$29,000- \$31,000	\$39,5000- \$44,5000

4.4 **Economic Factors:** the contractor has reported fence post showing signs of deterioration at ground level indicating the need to prioritise the replacement of the perimeter fencing.

4.4.1 Council records inform the stock value as at 30 June 2025 is \$3,175.

4.4.2 The Deer Park does not generate regular revenue and is 100% rates funded.

4.4.3 Tree work is required to protect the perimeter fencing. Recent storms have caused damage to a large tree within the deer enclosure and larges branches to damage a perimeter fence to the paddock occupied by the deer.

4.5 **Husbandry Practices:** effective animal welfare demands expertise in husbandry. Failure to meet compliance standards can result in legal consequences. In late 2024, an incident occurred within the enclosure resulting in the stag attacking and killing a fawn.

4.6 **Health and Safety:** The contractor has expressed concerns after sighting adults lifting children up to the fencing to attempt petting the animals and disregarding signage to observe caution.

4.6.1 The contractor is a 'lone' worker who hand feeds the animals for taming but never enters the enclosure.

4.6.2 The PICA must possess sufficient competency to safely manage deer in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999, the Code of Welfare and NAIT obligations, including the ability to identify and respond to animal behavioural risks (e.g. stags, fawning) and implementing a robust lone worker safety control.

5. Decommission Process

5.1 **Planning and Compliance:** Develop a simple project plan covering NAIT requirements, animal disposal/sale arrangements, health and safety controls, and communication with affected stakeholders. This ensures the process remains legally compliant and avoids cost escalations.

5.2 **Removal or Rehoming of Deer:** prioritise the safe sale, transfer, or humane disposal of all deer on site. Once animals are removed, all ongoing animal related operational, welfare, and compliance costs cease.

5.3 **Decommission Infrastructure:** retire the deer specific assets in a staged, cost-effective way. Eliminate hazards. Remove or make redundant structures on where

they interfere with future recreational use. Retain any elements that are safe and functional as general purpose assets.

- 5.4 **Site Rehabilitation:** Adopt a low cost scalable approach by removing hazardous trees/branches that threaten public safety. Allow the area to revert to passive green space with minimal landscape intervention. Future efforts should be made to restore the reserve to its natural state, such as soil remediation and replanting native vegetation. This is best determined after consultation with the community.
- 5.5 **Continued Monitoring:** Regular monitoring of the site should be conducted to ensure that the rehabilitation efforts are successful.
- 5.6 **Standard Reserve Maintenance:** integrate into standard parks and reserve maintenance.
- 5.7 **Sustainable Development:** Reinstating the land as open green space maintains public access, improves safety and avoids future capital reinvestment demands. Future use of the site should prioritise sustainability to prevent issues from arising.

6. Impact on the Community

- 6.1 **Economic Impact:** The decommissioning of the Deer Park will lead to the job loss of the casual contractor. However, the casual contractor has expressed their agreement with the decommissioning of the Deer Park.
 - 6.1.1 **Community Impact:** The decision affects a small number of residents who value the deer park as a local feature. However, visitation levels are low, and community reliance on the facility is limited. The activity does not provide an essential or widely used service and therefore does not have a high level of district-wide impact.
 - 6.1.2 **Dannevirke Community Board:** officers engaged the support of board members for potential options to sustain the deer park after the retirement of the current contractor, but no viable solution was able to be met.

7. Significance Assessment

- 7.1 In accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy and the decision-making provisions under the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), the proposal to decommission the Dannevirke Deer Park has been assessed to determine the degree of significance associated with the decision.
 - 7.1.1 **Effect on Levels of Service**

Decommissioning the deer park does not alter the level of service of a core Council activity. Deer husbandry and zoological displays are not identified as significant activities under Council's Long Term Plan (LTP). No amendments to an LTP level of service statement are triggered.

7.1.2 **Reversibility of the Decision**

If decommissioned, the land will remain in Council ownership as Recreation Reserve and reinstated as open green space. Future Councils could reinstate an animal display only through substantial new investment, new approvals, and compliance infrastructure. While reversible, reinstatement would require future funding decisions.

7.1.3 **Financial Thresholds**

The proposal avoids new capital expenditure. The decision instead reduces ongoing operational and compliance costs. It does not trigger the thresholds within the Significance and Engagement Policy relating to major financial commitments or new rating impacts.

7.1.4 **Policy Alignment and Strategic Direction**

The activity is not a strategic asset, nor does the proposal require changes to an underlying policy or strategic document. The decision aligns with the LGA requirement to ensure activities are financially sustainable and proportionate to community wellbeing outcomes.

7.1.5 **Public Interest**

There is community interest due to the park's long history, but this interest is not assessed as district-wide or substantial. Engagement may be appropriate, but a Special Consultative Procedure is not required, as the proposal does not meet the criteria for significance under section 97 of the LGA, nor does it materially alter the level of service of a significant activity.

8. Options

8.1 Option 1: Sell the deer with a land lease/license to occupy the Deer Park

8.2 Option 2: Sell / Dispose of animals and lease the deer park land.

8.3 Option 3: Dispose/Sell deer and decommission the deer park and reinstate as green space for recreation.

9. Assessment of Options

9.1 Option 1 – This option is unlikely to be feasible due to limited market demand, ongoing Council risk exposure, and substantial upfront upgrade costs.

9.2 Option 2 – Feasible if there is a suitable lessee and if Council accepts ongoing land management responsibilities. Operational burden is reduced but not eliminated.

9.3 Option 3 – the most sustainable, lowest risk and most cost-effective option for Council. It aligns with core functions, reduces long-term financial burden, and restores the land for wider public use.

Option 1: Advantages	Option 1: Disadvantages
Retain the deer as a local attraction without requiring Council to provide day-to-day animal care.	Finding a willing and suitable qualified lessee is highly uncertain. The scale of the facility, specialist requirements, and ongoing compliance obligation may deter potential operators.
Reduce operational responsibilities for Council while potentially generating modest lease revenue.	Council would continue to carry residual legal and reputational risk, as the landowner, regarding animal welfare, NAIT compliance, biosecurity issues, and public safety.
	Capital investment would still be required to meet minimum standards before any lease arrangement could be offered.
	The activity remains outside Council's core functions, and retaining the deer park maintains a non-essential asset that will continue to require oversight and monitoring.
Option 2: Advantages	Option 2: Disadvantages
Removes Council's legal responsibilities for animal welfare, NAIT, and biosecurity compliance.	The current site infrastructure is designed specifically for deer and may not suit other uses without modification
Allows Council to derive revenue through leasing the land for compatible activities, with lower operational complexity	Boundary fencing, water supply and tree management still a major reinvestment to ensure safe leasable condition.
Eliminates the 0.5 FTE operational requirement associated with managing animals on site.	Council continues to hold long-term responsibility for the asset, including safety, tree risk, and general maintenance of the reserve land.
Options 3: Advantage	Option 3: Disadvantages
Fully removes Council's compliance obligations of -animal welfare, NAIT, and biosecurity	Loss of long standing community feature
Eliminates the need to recruit a new specialist caretaker (0.5 FTE) and deploys existing resources to absorb the additional operational maintenance costs for green	

space. Avoids significant and ongoing capital investment required to maintain fencing, water supply, and pasture to animal-care standards.	
Reinforces Council's focus on core services, aligning with the LGA purpose.	
Returns the land to broad recreational use, improving safety, accessibility and public amenity. Simplifying long-term management to standard park maintenance levels.	

10. Consultation

- 10.1 Engagement with the current contractor, support staff, and past volunteers, have provided the insights to support the recommendation to decommission the deer park.
- 10.2 At the Dannevirke Community Board meeting held on 20th April 2026 the Board provided their endorsement to support the recommendation to decommission the Dannevirke Deer Park.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Dannevirke Deer Park has been sustained for the past five years through the commitment and specialist knowledge of the current contractor, who has acted as the primary caretaker of the animals during this time. Their forthcoming retirement creates a significant operational gap that cannot be easily or affordably filled.
- 11.2 Maintaining legal compliance under the Animal Welfare Act, NAIT requirements, and associated biosecurity and husbandry standards now requires a level of expertise and time commitment equivalent to approximately 0.5 FTE, in addition to regular operating costs. Recruiting or developing staff with this level of specialist capability represents both a financial and organisational challenge for Council.
- 11.3 In addition to operational resourcing pressures, the facility requires substantial capital investment to meet fencing, water supply, pasture, and safety standards. Condition assessments identify the need for major renewal of boundary fencing, tree management, and associated infrastructure to ensure the environment remains safe for both animals and the public. These upgrades carry significant cost and would require ongoing reinvestment to ensure continued compliance.

- 11.4 Deer parks and zoological displays are not a core function of territorial authorities under the Local Government Act. The activity does not contribute directly to Council's core purpose of delivering essential services or supporting well-being in a manner proportionate to cost. The park generates no revenue and is fully rate-funded.
- 11.5 Decommissioning the Dannevirke Deer Park is considered the most sensible and sustainable course of action.

Attachments

Nil.

Condition of Deer Park Fencing











