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THE TRUST AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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(This is the text of an address to the Triennial Conference of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust held in Wellington 24-26 July 1987. Along with the contribution following by Murray Hosking of the Department of Conservation, it examines the vexed question of the shape and role of the Trust within the new department. Of concern to the members of this Association is the future of public archaeology in New Zealand. I have urged the publication of these two addresses in the Newsletter as I believe they are important. Ed.)

Wide-ranging, often revolutionary, changes in government administration in the environmental area are now in place. The new organisations began operating on 1 April 1987. On that date the Trust's 32-year association with the Department of Internal Affairs ended. Our association is now with the Department of Conservation.

That association has meant changes. We have now linked with a Department which has an overall conservation mission. Many aspects of that mission overlap with our work in the Trust.

DOC is responsible for some 200 historic reserves previously run by the Department of Lands and Survey and for the many other historic sites developed by New Zealand Forest Service. DOC's extensive management and advocacy responsibilities coincide closely with those of the Trust. Previously fragmented responsibilities in these areas are now pulled together in DOC. What does this mean for the Trust?

At the most obvious and basic level the Department appoints and pays our staff. It provides financial and other services. It acts as our channel to the Government in setting our annual grant and in other matters where Government or Ministerial action is needed. An example of the latter is protection notices for threatened historic buildings, which require the consent of the Minister of Conservation.

The Trust is still, however, an autonomous and independent body. Our affairs are governed by our Trust Board, which in turn is advised and serviced by committees and staff. At the regional level, our work is served by our indispensable network of regional committees and by our regional staff in Auckland and Otago.

The constitutional framework has not changed with the move to the Department of Conservation. The Historic Places Act, the Board, the Trust's functions and powers, regional committees and membership all remain in place as before. These statements are, however, subject to a review of all quango bodies associated with the Department of Conservation. Government has decided that such a review will take place in 1988.

Let us look in detail at three main areas for co-operation - property management, archaeology and your work in the regional committees.

Property management

In the case of property management, both organisations have similar responsibilities for managing historic resource components of the national estate. Both are responsible for house museums and historic sites. DOC has a larger body of historic places to administer, but both organisations face similar challenges and responsibilities. There is an obvious need for the two management systems to be brought closer together. They need to be harmonised so that best use is made with money and people. New Zealand is too small to allow such systems and resources to be duplicated in a field where resources are in very short supply. We have therefore had talks between the Trust's Properties Committee and the Department to try to reach agreement on a joint management structure for properties.

I am convinced that the most effective historic resource management will be achieved by one management system which has a strong regional and local network. We will retain the Trust's identity. Trust properties will remain as such. We will keep ownership, control, and our existing agreements will remain in place. Our properties will, however, possibly be managed through the regional and district machinery of the Department. The present Trust property staff would be responsible primarily to regional and district DOC staff, but with clear professional links to the Trust. Our present regional property staff would take up wider responsibilities for the whole historic resource in their region.

We see, also, a wider role for the Trust Board and its Properties Committee at national level. In future we will have policy and oversight roles for all historic resources within the DOC/Trust estate. This will considerably widen the focus of the Trust at national level, although it would step back from direct day to day operation of properties from central level.

I know these changes will cause uncertainties, but I am equally sure that they will make us more effective and more

efficient. Details still have to be worked out, but there is a lot of goodwill in DOC for our work. There is also a commitment from DOC to respect the identity of the Trust.

The properties will remain Trust properties. Our leaflets and souvenirs will still be available at properties. We will remain responsible for the key policy and financial decisions.

Archaeology

On the first of April this year our archaeology staff became part of the Science Directorate of DOC. The exact relationships resulting from this change are still being worked out. It is no secret that I have got mixed feelings about this change. The forthcoming separation of our archaeology section from Antrim House is a matter of regret to me.

The important point, however, is that the staff will continue to provide advice and servicing for our statutory responsibilities, from their new base in the Science Directorate. Our archaeologists, for their part will receive the benefits of location in the Science Directorate. This should result in better backup and support for their work.

For our part, we will continue to make decisions required under the Historic Places Act through our established decision-making machinery.

I am sure you will agree that we need a more strategic approach to deal with the continued loss of archaeological sites to development. We need to get away from the reactive situation of the past. Comprehensive archaeological surveys, along the lines of the assessments carried out in Northland and Waikato, must be continued. These could in future be modelled on the Protected Natural Area Survey programmes which have been taken up by DOC.

Regional committees

I have talked mainly about changes affecting the parts of the Trust serviced by staff. What happens in your own regions is naturally going to be of greatest interest to you. We have an unusual organisation. We combine elements of Government administration and community support. These parts work together, with difficulty at times, but usually very productively. Nevertheless, the Trust has been expected to do a job which is really beyond its present and likely resources as a stand-alone organisation. You are of course, more aware of this than anyone else. You have a very large brief and you get small resources to do your work.

The advent of DOC means significant changes for the Trust at regional and local levels. The most obvious change is of course, the representation of the department on regional committees. I know some committees have already found benefits in this link, and are getting increased support and services at local level. I expect the Department will help the Trust in many ways. It will be able to help us with information on land ownership, zoning, etc., with liaison with property owners, applicants for statutory approvals, with links with the Maori community, etc.

The Department will be able to improve liaison with applicants for financial assistance. It will be able to provide legal and planning advice and possibly representation at hearings.

This does not mean that regional and district offices of the Department can take over all this work from regional committees or that they would even want to. Rather, it means that we have to work out how best to work together.

Regional committees provide something which Government departments find difficult to tap into. Community based bodies such as regional committees provide a range of knowledge, enthusiasm and views from the community. We are fortunate to be part of a Department whose policy is to consult with and seek the support of the community. The Department will certainly look to regional committees for community input into its work with historic resources. Regional committees will be asked to advise and assist with a wider range of work than may have been the case previously. Adapting to this new relationship may not be entirely easy. There will be concerns about loss of identity and the separate image of the Trust, but I am confident that these concerns will be overcome.

Looking ahead:

1. We will be working much more closely with DOC in many areas of management of historic resources.
2. We will be providing support and backup for DOC in its historic resource responsibilities both locally and nationally.
3. Our Board and its committees, and regional committees, will have a wider role in all historic resource matters. This will be helped by a more holistic view of history and historic resources in the Department of Conservation leaving behind the artificial administrative divisions of earlier systems.
4. Our Board and its committees will have wider policy and management roles and less involvement in detailed management and operation of properties. Most management and operation responsibilities will be carried out at regional and district levels.

As regional committees you will have a wider role. You will need to work closely with both the Department and the national arms of the Trust as well as with your local communities. You are the vital link between your local communities and our national work. Neither Antrim House nor the head office of DOC can do your work. Nor can it be done by DOC's regional and district staff. You are our eyes and our conscience in your communities. And it is your work that gives purpose and direction to our national efforts.

I conclude with this observation. Your committee will be as important to the work of the Trust in two year's time as they have been in the past. I wish you all well in that work, and hope you find our new context rewarding.