

31 October 2024

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 25 September 2024, in which you asked for:

*“Any and all documents, briefings, reports, emails etc from DOC to the Conservation Minister in relation to halting the expressions of interest process for the Chateau Tongariro.”*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

### **Context**

The purpose of the expression of interest process for the Chateau Tongariro was to test the market for potential investors and to determine whether leasing the Chateau would be a viable option. Unfortunately, the potential commercial lease options for the Chateau will require significant investment to repair, refurbish and seismically strengthen the main building. Any investment required to bring the Chateau up to standard would need to be funded from a new hotel operator and/or the Crown. Based on the scale of the investment required, the Minister has prudently decided to pause this process and to seek advice from Cabinet on next steps on the future of the Chateau, in due course.

### **Response**

We have identified one document within scope of your request. This is a Ministerial Briefing (24-B-0385) which informed the Minister’s decision in relation to the Expression of Interest (EOI) process for the Chateau Tongariro (Chateau).

This material is outlined in the table below with the applicable briefing accompanying our response as Attachment 1 (subject to relevant withholding grounds).

Attachment A ‘*Chateau Tongariro - Feasibility Review 26 July 2024 (Draft)*’ is withheld in full subject to section 9(2)(i) - to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
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1	12 August 2024	Briefing (24-B-0385): Chateau Tongariro Expression of Interest update and options for next steps	Released in part
		Attachment A 'Chateau Tongariro - Feasibility Review 26 July 2024 (Draft)	Withheld in full

I have decided to release the relevant parts of item 1 listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- advice still under consideration, section 9(2)(f)(iv) – to maintain the current constitutional conventions protecting the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers and officials,
- free and frank expression under section 9(2)(g)(i) – to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs,
- advice subject to legal privilege, under section 9(2)(h) - to maintain legal professional privilege,
- commercially sensitive information, under section 9(2)(i) - to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

[Redacted signature area]

Nāku noa, nā

[Redacted signature]

CJ Juby  
 Director, Business Services  
 Department of Conservation  
 Te Papa Atawhai