



14 November 2025

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 5 November 2025, requesting the following information:

- *I am writing to request, under the Official Information Act 1982, copies of correspondence sent by the Tuawhenua Trust-specifically authored by Brenda Tahi -to the Prime Minister regarding the Service Management Plan (SMP), the Tribal, and the Iwi.*
- *This request includes:*
  - *The original letter(s) sent by Brenda Tahi on behalf of the Tuawhenua Trust*
  - *Any subsequent correspondence between the Trust and the Crown relating to this matter*

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Please see attached four documents in scope of your request.

Please note that some information has been marked and withheld as 'out of scope' where it does not relate to your request.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

Anna Graham  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**



29 July 2024

The Right Honourable Christopher Luxon

Prime Minister of New Zealand

The Beehive

Wellington

cc Minister of Regional Development – Hon Shane Jones

Minister of Māori Development – Hon Tama Potaka

Tena koe e te Pirimia, e te Rangatira!

We are writing to bring to your attention a gross anomaly in the processes of your government that is seriously hindering progress and development in our region.

This anomaly involves:

1. Your government's departments are requiring our organisation (amongst others) to gain approval from the Ngāi Tuhoe post-settlement governance entity (Te Uru Taumatua of Tāneatua) for applications to funding programmes, before these applications will even be accepted for consideration by the department. We know of no other New Zealand person or organisation that is formally required by the Government to gain approval of a non-government organisation as part of its process for application to a government programme. We consider this requirement to be a transgression of our rights as New Zealand citizens.
2. We are told that this practice has evolved in Government because it signed a 'Service Management Plan' with Te Uru Taumatua (TUT). TUT only represents people and organisations that subscribe to it, and we do not. We object to your government's departments applying the protocols of the SMP to us when we did not sign or support it.

Further, for clarification:

1. We are the Tuawhenua Trust, a trust responsible for 9000 ha in 25 blocks of privately-owned land around Ruatāhuna. This area is known as the Tuawhenua and has never been part of Te Urewera Park managed currently by TUT.

2. Tuawhenua Trust is not funded or supported by TUT, or accountable to TUT in any way, nor do we subscribe to its programmes, activities or policies. Its arrangements with the Government should not be transgressing our right to deal with state agencies in an unfettered manner.
3. The SMP is between TUT and some of your government's departments, signed and sealed without consultation with people and organizations it might affect. As it turns out many hapu, whanau and organisations in our region object to the SMP – both how it was developed and how it is being implemented.
4. We have been told that the SMP applies to all of 'Ngāi Tūhoe' enquiries and applications for funding or assistance. How is the status of 'Ngāi Tūhoe' determined? In our case, the person making application on behalf of the trust is actually Ngāti Porou. Many of our land owners, like our trustees, are members of other tribes, although they may state Tūhoe as one of their tribes.
5. Does this SMP apply because we are based in Ruatāhuna, even though our lands are privately-owned and not administered by TUT? Is it because our lands are 'Māori', and in the region of the Tūhoe tribe? What if a company with no connection with Tūhoe was based on General Land that it had bought in Ruatāhuna. Would that company be subject to the SMP? There appears to be a sweeping generalization over the people and organisations of the Tuawhenua region as being Ngāi Tūhoe, which in turn makes them then subservient in some way to TUT. We object to being categorized by your government's departments as Ngāi Tūhoe, with this effect and in this manner.
6. The outcome of this anomaly is that development in our region is being denied government support. Businesses such as ours that are working to lift the economy of our region should be able to get that support unencumbered. For example, we have been stone-walled in the last year on two applications for funding – one to assist our honey business in exporting to United States, and another to build capability in our staff to support this market development critical for our business' future. We know of other entities in this area that have had similar blocking of their enterprising initiatives, to the extent that they have simply given up trying to work with your government's departments. We're astounded that departments apply protocols that undermine regional development when this is a stated aim of this Government.
7. Cumulatively, the denial of unfettered access to government programmes and funding is seriously undermining efforts in our region to make good use of our resources, create jobs and improve the lot of our people.
8. These anomalous processes waste scarce time and resources in organisations dealing with your government's departments. Please find attached an outline of our wasteful experience with Te Puni Kōkiri regarding our application for funding a project for market development in the United States. We see this Government is committed to

efficiency of its business, yet its departments waste their time and ours through the application of these protocols.

Kāti! We seek the removal of this anomaly from across government processes so that organisations in our region that do not subscribe to TUT and the SMP can work with the Government in an unfettered manner.

Heoi ano

pp



Nā Ngā Kaitiaki o Tuawhenua

Richard Tūmarae (Chair)

Hekenoa Te Kurapa

Professor Rangi Mātāmua

Hinerau Rāmekā

Brenda Tahi

Puke Tīmoti

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## Attachment 1: Application to Te Puni Kokiri for Support for Export Market Development in USA for Manawa Honey NZ

### Manawa Honey NZ

1. Manawa Honey NZ is the trading name of the Tuawhenua Trust for its business producing and marketing our range of native floral honeys from our region. We set up Manawa Honey NZ from scratch, as a small beekeeping operation, 10 years ago to utilize our natural resources, to develop and to create jobs for our people, and to lift their wealth and wellbeing.
2. We now run an integrated land to brand business covering beekeeping through extraction to honey packing, marketing and exporting. Our honey is sold in over 100 supermarkets and other stores throughout New Zealand and we have exported honey to China, Japan, UK and the Middle East.
3. However, Manawa Honey's business here in NZ and overseas was decimated by the impacts of Covid through the years of 2020-22. A key pillar of our recovery strategy has been to recover and expand our export markets. During that Covid period we worked with NZTE on the US market, undertaking a number of projects in market research and validation, brand review and design.

### Application for Funding to TPK

4. In early May 2023, we were recommended by NZTE to TPK as a worthy candidate to make urgent application to that department TPK for assistance in export development utilising their Māori Business funds sitting unused at the end of their financial year. To qualify we had to complete a detailed application and provide all supporting documentation urgently. We duly submitted an application for support for marketing for our entry to the US market.
5. Later in May 2023, the Investment Committee of TPK approved our application. As we understood we had fulfilled all requirements of the TPK application process that we had been invited into.
6. However, a contract for the project was not drawn up. Instead, we were asked for information about our relationship with TUT, which we provided. In the meantime, in May 2023, information about our application, which we assumed had been made to TPK in confidence, was also shared with TUT, who then required TPK to send us back to TUT for application.
7. We objected to this requirement being brought into the application process when our proposal had already been approved by TPK's investment committee. The process outlined to us at the beginning of the process had not mentioned TUT at that point, otherwise we would never have bothered with making application. So, we had never been informed that this step would be part of the process, until it became the last-minute last hurdle. We objected to the last-minute change in the application process. We also objected being sent to TUT for approval of our application because we are not part of or accountable to TUT or its SMP.
8. TPK didn't seem to know how to deal with our objection. TPK staff tried to get around the issue by suggesting that we get an exemption to the SMP protocol, even though we did not ask for this. TUT did not agree. Matters languished.

9. Our Executive Trustee, Brenda Tahī, requested a meeting with relevant managers in TPK in July 2023, but was stone-walled. So, Brenda outlined the position of the Tuawhenua Trustees on the situation in a letter to TPK in August 2023.
10. No formal communication was received from TPK in response to that letter. Indeed, there was simply no communication until we prompted TPK for an update on the status of our application, many months later in January 2024.
11. At this point, TPK sent us to NZTE to deal with our application, even though the application had clearly been for monies administered by TPK. We went round in circles through February and March 2024 with emails and phone calls to both departments. NZTE was clear that it was up to TPK to deal with the application for funding, and that their role was simply to provide recommendation for us to make that application.
12. In April 2024, we were advised that TPK was considering withdrawing our application from their application process. However, it was not until June 2024, that we received an email advising that TPK had withdrawn our project from their system for investment. This email did not acknowledge either of our letters written to the managers of TPK regarding our application. It was received 13 months after we had been invited to apply to their programme, and had got it through their investment process.
13. Meantime, we have held off our entry to the US market, as we had understood that our application for critical support from TPK for that market development was approved for funding. The year of 2023-24 was simply wasted with the chaos created by TPK's changes in the investment process, and handling of matters regarding the SMP protocols with TUT.
14. Through this fiasco, critical opportunities for lifting our honey business to another level and the creation of jobs in Ruatahuna have simply been lost. Even staff members in Te Puni Kokiri commented that the department is supposed to be about Māori Development but instead it was hindering development by the way in which it was administering its funding.



13 December 2024

Nga Kaitiaki o Tuawhenua  
Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust  
Private Bag RO 3001  
Rotorua 2040

Tēnā koutou,

By way of introduction my name is Mārama Edwards, and I am the Deputy Chief Executive – Māori, Communities and Partnerships at the Ministry of Social Development. I write to you in my capacity as the Chair of the He Tapuae Service Management Plan (He Tapuae) Authorising Environment Committee which was formed by the parties to He Tapuae to support its successful implementation.

I apologise for the delay in you receiving a response to your letter dated 29 July 2024 (the letter) which was sent to the Office of the Prime Minister highlighting concerns around the process used to assess applications for government funding relating to Tūhoe and their area of interest (rohe). I think it may be useful to begin my response by providing some historical context around the Tūhoe Treaty settlement process.

### **Tūhoe negotiated mana motuhake redress as part of the Treaty settlement process**

In relation to ngā hapū o Ngāi Tūhoe, the Crown is bound by the terms of the Ngāi Tūhoe Treaty settlement, which requires the Crown as far as possible to act in a manner that enables Ngāi Tūhoe and its hapū to exercise their autonomy. This has been expressed further through He Tapuae, and the associated engagement protocols, which govern the exchange of information and relationship between the Crown and Te Uru Taumatua. The Crown and Ngāi Tūhoe signed He Tapuae in July 2021, replacing the earlier Service Management Plan of 2012.

The purpose of He Tapuae is to develop, implement, expand and renew from time to time a plan for the transformation of the social circumstances of the people of Tūhoe. He Tapuae forms part of the mana motuhake redress in the Tūhoe Deed of Settlement which was ratified by the people of Tūhoe and signed on 4 June 2013 (the Settlement). The settlement was implemented by the passage of the Tūhoe Claims Settlement Act 2014.

Information regarding the Tūhoe rohe that was included in the Settlement can be found at: <https://www.tkm.govt.nz/iwi/tuhoe/>.

## **The Crown and Tūhoe have worked to strengthen the leadership of He Tapuae**

As you are aware, He Tapuae contains a set of Crown Engagement Protocols with Tūhoe:

- Engagement Protocol 1: Working together on joint initiatives under *He Tapuae*. This stipulates that "engagement will be directly with Te Uru Taumatua where initiatives between Te Uru Taumatua and the Crown parties support the achievement of He Tapuae" and that the "Crown Parties will seek input and agreement from Te Uru Taumatua on the design of these initiatives".
- Engagement Protocol 2: Ensuring co-ordination and consistency on initiatives outside *He Tapuae*. The Crown Parties will advise Te Uru Taumatua, and seek endorsement, where appropriate, and support from Te Uru Taumatua (who will in turn seek like endorsement from their Tūhoe Tribals) where: Initiatives or programmes led or supported by the Crown Parties affect Tūhoe marae or grouping of Tūhoe people. Tūhoe whanau or marae approach the Crown parties directly in relation to services or funding. For Tūhoe hapu not operating as part of a Tūhoe Tribal Authority but wanting to access Tūhoe resources to enable coherency to Tribal communities aims, Te Uru Taumatua will also require a Tribal endorsement.
- Engagement Protocol 3: Connecting commercial initiatives and opportunities with Te Uru Taumatua. The Crown parties will advise Te Uru Taumatua when the Crown Parties are seeking to engage with third parties to provide services into the Tūhoe rohe on behalf of the Crown Parties. The Crown Parties will subsequently advise Te Uru Taumatua when they have engaged the third parties to provide services into the Tūhoe rohe and the Crown Parties will, wherever possible, advise Te Uru Taumatua if the Crown Parties become aware of any private or commercial entity wanting to deliver services into the Tūhoe rohe.

These engagement protocols seek to bring coordination, consistency and continuity to enable a no-surprises approach to the partnership between Tūhoe and the Crown. They are designed to correct instances of poor coordination and missteps that have occurred in the past. Through the engagement protocols, Crown agencies have committed to informing, educating and encouraging the cohesion that is essential for successful partnership.

Although Te Puni Kōkiri is not a signatory to He Tapuae, all Crown agencies are subject to adhering to the commitments set out in settlement legislation. The He Tapuae Authorising Environment Committee is responsible for promoting the use of Crown Engagement Protocols across government departments and Ministries.

### **Application to Te Puni Kōkiri for Support for Export Market Development. (May 2023)**

Te Puni Kōkiri have advised that this application was made in the name of Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust. They understood this trust to be an Ahu whenua trust trading as Manawa Honey NZ and established to promote the use and administration of land in the interest of its owners. The owners being Tūhoe marae or grouping of Tūhoe people. Accordingly, Te Puni Kōkiri formed the initial view that Engagement Protocol 2 applied.

Te Puni Kōkiri have confirmed that Te Uru Taumatua was approached to see whether the application from the trust could be exempted from the Engagement Protocols.



Before deciding, Te Uru Taumatua requested further information from Te Puni Kōkiri, but their request was not responded to. It is noted that Te Uru Taumatua did not receive a copy of your application and Te Puni Kōkiri continued to assess your application.

Some of the staff who handled the application, have now left Te Puni Kōkiri and so efforts to validate some of the events described in the letter have been difficult. Te Puni Kōkiri did broker an engagement between NZ Trade & Enterprise (NZTE) and Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust, as they believed NZTE could provide access to export marketing expertise (subject to the application being accepted for investment). Many of the described delays are due to the efforts to understand how to proceed, without sharing the application with Te Uru Taumatua. Based on the understanding that Engagement Protocol 2 applied, the application could not progress without an endorsement, the application was withdrawn as it could not progress through to Te Puni Kōkiri's investment board.

### **The Engagement Protocols and your business structure**

Upon receiving the letter of 29 July 2024 and considering the concerns raised in respect of the application above, I commissioned an internal review of your business structure based on publicly available information. From this review, the areas of uncertainty for me are:

- Your letter is from "the Tuawhenua Trust." It is not clear whether this is the same trust as "the Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust" or whether there are two trusts.
- The Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust is an Ahu whenua trust. Such trusts are established for the benefit of persons beneficially entitled to the land (as opposed to the benefit of the public) and so are generally not considered charitable. I understand that the Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust has been registered as a charitable entity but wish to understand the scope of its charitable operations.
- The Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust is listed as the Ultimate Holding Company (UHC) of Manawa NZ Limited. Because Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust does not hold any shares in Manawa NZ Limited it is unclear the means by which that trust controls the company (or the extent of such control).

It is important that Te Uru Taumatua and the Crown agencies committed to He Tapuae have clarity about the business structures relating to Tuawhenua Trust and Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust so that they can provide you with certainty as to the application of the Engagement Protocols to future funding applications. I look forward to receiving information from you in respect of the above and, with your permission, I will share this information with the parties to He Tapuae so as to help assess future funding applications from your related businesses.

### **Looking to the future**

Through He Tapuae, the Crown is committed to transforming the social circumstances of Tūhoe by coordinating Crown service delivery and investment with Te Uru Taumatua to ensure consistency, continuity and a no surprises approach to the partnership. Given these commitments and the fact that the land administered by the Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust is within the Tūhoe area of interest (rohe) and involves a

grouping of Tūhoe people, access to Crown investment requires co-ordination with Te Uru Taumatua.

I encourage you and your trustees therefore to explore the potential of what a future relationship with Te Uru Taumatua might look like so that great things can be achieved for the benefit of all involved. Let me know if I can help facilitate a meeting with Tamati Kruger, Chair of Te Uru Taumatua or it is open to you and your trustees to engage with Te Uru Taumatua directly.

A summary of the Crown's investment to date is included in **Appendix 1**.

Mauriora



Mārama Edwards  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Māori, Communities and Partnerships  
Ministry of Social Development

Cc: Grace Smit – Deputy Chief Executive, Te Puni Kōkiri  
Paul Jones – Director Group Initiatives, Strategic Policy and Programmes,  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

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## Appendix 1 - Crown investment in Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust and Manawa Honey

|                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Total Crown Funding Committed</b> | \$2,516,367.00 |
| <b>Funding Paid to Date:</b>         | \$2,287,557.30 |

### Breakdown by Agency

**MBIE spend to date:** \$1,872,109.30 (out of \$2,100,919.00 committed)

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Service Type</b>   | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Funding Committed</b> | <b>Funding Paid to Date</b> |
|-------------|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2015 - 2017 | Te Pūnaha Hiringa: Māori Innovation Fund - Māori Innovation Commercial Advisors | The Recipient will work with the Commercial Advisor to identify and assess investment opportunities (including those set out in the Recipient's application for the Funding), and to develop and embed the skills and networks they need to put their plans into action. | \$150,000.00             | \$151,790.30                |
| 2019 - 2020 | He Tupu Ōhanga: Commercial Advisors Scheme                                      | Growing exports by researching and validating and selling a value-added product online, direct to international customers via e-commerce channel   | \$69,000.00              | \$69,000.00                 |
| 2020 - 2022 | Provincial Growth Fund - Māori & Pasifika Business Investments                  | The building of a Food Production Hub in Ruatāhuna including processing, packaging and storage facilities for food products.   | \$986,519.00             | \$986,519.00                |
| 2020 - 2022 | One Billion Trees – science partnerships  | Mātauranga Māori research project to trial various options and techniques to restore Ruatāhuna forest which is a 9,000 hectare estate. Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust is working with Landcare and Scion blending western science knowledge with mātauranga knowledge.            | \$318,000.00             | \$318,000.00                |
| 2021 - 2022 | Endeavour Fund research programme:  | Sub-contractor to Lincoln University.  | \$2,400.00               | \$1,800.00                  |

| Date        | Service Type   | Description   | Funding Committed | Funding Paid to Date                            |
|-------------|--|---|-------------------|---|
|             | Unlocking Export Prosperity  | Brenda Tahi represents Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust on the Advisory Board.   |                   |   |
| 2021 - 2026 | Endeavour Fund research programme: Te Weu o te Kaitiaki – Indigenous regeneration pathways | <p>Sub-contractor to Landcare Research NZ Ltd (Manaaki Whenua).</p> <p>Our research will use te ao Māori worldview and whakapapa frameworks alongside the integration of value and ecological networks to re-imagine biocultural solutions that simultaneously restore ecological systems, reinforce identity, reconnect people to place, enhance community wellbeing, and deliver sustainable economic growth for communities etc,</p> | \$575,000.00      | <p>\$345,000.00</p> <p>Programme is ongoing</p> |

**TPK spend to date:** \$415,448.00 (out of \$415,448.00 committed)

| Date | Service Type          | Description  | Funding Committed | Funding Paid to Date |
|------|-----------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------|
| 2017 | Whenua Māori Fund     | To produce a multipurpose feasibility study and business case that grows a viable commercial enterprise on Māori freehold land.  | \$230,360         | \$230,360            |
| 2021 | Cadetships            | To enrol a total of seven Māori cadets (1new and 6 existing employees), to train, mentor and employ in full-time permanent roles based in New Zealand, for at least six months paid employment at Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust. | \$66,088          | \$66,088             |
| 2022 | Māori Business Growth | This investment will assist Tūhoe Tuawhenua Trust t/a Manawa Honey to access expertise to validate a USA   | \$119,000         | \$119,000            |

| Date | Service Type | Description   | Funding Committed | Funding Paid to Date  |
|------|--------------|---|-------------------|---|
|      |              | market entry, develop a US specific proposition to enable Manawa Honey to market & sell their products directly to customers in the USA. The focus of the project will be on capability transfer to Manawa Honey. |                   | <i>Funding was split as follows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021/22 - \$60k</li> <li>• 2022/23 - \$59k</li> </ul> |

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31 August 2025

Mārama Edwards  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Māori, Communities and Partnerships  
Ministry of Social Development

Cc:

Grace Smit – Deputy Chief Executive, Te Puni Kōkiri  
Paul Jones – Director Group Initiatives, Strategic Policy and Programmes, Ministry of  
Business, Innovation and Employment

Tena koe Mārama

It has been many months since we received your letter of 13 December 2024. While we acknowledge the delay in our formal reply, please do not mistake this for a lack of priority. The magnitude of the matters raised in your letter warranted serious and considered reflection on our part. We now write to respond in full.

We brought our concerns directly to the Prime Minister, expecting that the government would respond to our issues with objective and fair consideration. Instead, the response we received from you dismisses our concerns and promotes the interests of *He Tapuae*, with little regard for the serious issues we raised.

As trustees of Te Tuawhenua Trust and rangatira of our hapū, we were deeply affronted by the content of your letter. It compels us to question whether, in your role as Chair of the government committee responsible for implementing *He Tapuae*, you are able to impartially assess its flaws. In our view, your position raises a clear conflict of interest. So we ask: **Are you able to objectively consider the concerns we have raised, given your vested role in the advancement of *He Tapuae*?**

We respond to your letter addressing the following key matters (and ask you related questions):

- Hapū autonomy
- Engagement Protocol 2 (EP2) of He Tapuae
- Engagement Protocol 3 of He Tapuae
- Application of EP2 by Te Puni Kōkiri
- Internal Review of Our Structure

- Looking to the Future

## Hapū Autonomy

As you rightly acknowledge, the Crown is bound by the Ngāi Tūhoe treaty settlement to act in a manner that enables Ngāi Tūhoe and its hapū to exercise their autonomy. To be absolutely clear: **Ngāi Tūhoe as our iwi is a collective of hapū, each with its own mana motuhake. That autonomy of hapu has never been, and never will be, subsumed by iwi identity or structure.**

We acknowledge that arrangements with Te Uru Taumatua, such as *He Tapuae*, are one way the Crown can seek to meet its obligations to Ngāi Tūhoe at an iwi level. **However, we ask you to justify why elements of *He Tapuae*, as currently implemented, actively transgress, diminish or eliminate pathways for hapū of Ngāi Tūhoe to exercise their autonomy?** As outlined in our original letter, the Crown is not only failing to enable hapū autonomy through *He Tapuae*, but is in fact directly obstructing it.

Please do not merely reiterate the history of *He Tapuae*, and its earlier version Service Management Plan of 2012, as justifications for current Crown actions. Ministers and departmental Chief Executives must understand that these frameworks are **not** supported by many hapū, individuals and organisations within Tūhoe, a core reason for that is the sustained erosion of hapū autonomy through *He Tapuae*.

You described *He Tapuae* as a mechanism for transforming the social circumstances of Tūhoe people. Frankly, we are astounded by that characterisation, for several reasons

1. **Firstly**, the tribal hui of Ruatāhuna was recently informed by a member of TUT Board that *He Tapuae* was explicitly designed to cut off government funding from Tūhoe people and organisations that had previously benefited from it. As we stated in our earlier letter, this is exactly what has occurred. Positive initiatives have been blocked, and opportunities for development have been stalled – not for lack of vision or effort, but because of the way the government has chosen to implement *He Tapuae*.
2. **Secondly**, the framework has systematically denied funding to hapū and community organisations that were once delivering real outcomes for their people. In this way, *He Tapuae* has become a barrier to progress, detracting from rather than contributing to, the social and economic wellbeing of Tūhoe communities.
3. **Thirdly**, the current regime under *He Tapuae*, is not only obstructive to hapū-led development, it delivers little, if anything, instead. In our community of Ruatāhuna, we have gained little or nothing under *He Tapuae* - no housing programmes, no assistance with social issues, no marae improvements, no improvements to our road, no jobs created, no enterprise, no environmental programmes...depressingly, the list goes on.

Another question to you, as the government's appointed representative in these matters, **how can you continue to advocate for *He Tapuae* when there is clear and growing**

**evidence of the harm it is causing, and little or no evidence that it is delivering anything positive let alone transformative for the social wellbeing of our people?**

*He Tapuāe* has become an instrument of division and disadvantage across our iwi, undermining hapū autonomy denying the rights of citizens, and weakening the social fabric of our communities. This is a travesty that demands recognition and redress by those in government responsible for its design and implementation.

So our questions for you on this matter:

1. In our democracy of Aotearoa, do you believe it is appropriate for the government to partner with an iwi organisation in a way that restricts the rights and opportunities for a hapū or groupings of its people?
2. Is the denial and erosion of rights by an iwi authority over its hapū and people akin to autocratic or dictatorial behaviour? Is the Crown comfortable with being complicit in this form of internal oppression through its formal partnerships with an iwi authority.

### Engagement Protocol 2 (EP2)

In your letter, you describe EP2 as a protocol intended to ensure coordination and consistency on initiatives outside the scope of *He Tapuāe*. **Our question for you here is where and how can an agreement seriously pertain to matters and parties that are outside the agreement, especially where those parties were not consulted on and did not agree to the terms of the agreement?**

You quote EP2 as saying “The Crown parties will advise Te Uru Taumatua and seek endorsement, where appropriate, and seek support from their Tūhoe tribals...”

EP2 clearly states that it is incumbent on Crown parties to advise TUT on matters being considered under *He Tapuāe*. So we ask: **why, in the case we raised in our original letter, did Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) the Crown party in that instance, fail to advise TUT directly, and instead require us, the Tuawhenua Trust (a non-party to *He Tapuāe*), to first obtain endorsement from TUT before our proposal would even be reconsidered?**

We outlined this flawed process clearly in our our original letter. Yet your response not only failed to acknowledge the problem, it defended TPK's actions as being in accordance with EP2. We must ask: **how do you reconcile this with the plain meaning of EP2?**

Further, **do you realise that when any Tūhoe organisation approaches Te Puni Kokiri for support, they are met with a stock email (see the email in Attachment 1), instructing them to seek endorsement from TUT before any application is considered. Is this the practice the Crown intended by EP2?** Because this is not what EP2 actually says, according to your letter of 13 December 2024.

You acknowledge that Te Puni Kōkiri is not a signatory to *He Tapuāe*. Yet, as a Crown agency, it is required to uphold the Crown's obligations under the Ngāi Tūhoe settlement, including the exercise and protection of hapū autonomy. **How then can TPK justify enforcing a process that mimics *He Tapuāe*, which it is not party to, while simultaneously**



**denying the autonomy of hapū that the Crown is legally bound to uphold?** You state that all Crown agencies must act in accordance with the settlement legislation. **Where in the settlement legislation does it say that organisations within the Tūhoe area must first seek endorsement from Te Uru Taumatua before applying for Crown services or funding?**

### Engagement Protocol 3

We have serious concerns and many unanswered questions regarding this protocol. **From the Crown's perspective, what is the purpose of EP3? Does the government not want to engender free enterprise in our region? What sort of regime does the government intend for our region and why is that, from our assessment, different from all other regions of our country? Does the government genuinely believe it is appropriate for the Crown to share information about all commercial activity within the Tūhoe area of interest? Is this approached being applied uniformly across the entire Ngāi Tūhoe area, or selectively?**

Further questions are:

**Is the government sharing knowledge of Ngāti Whare's commercial activity with TUT?**

**Does the Crown believe this practice respects the principles of commercial sensitivity, privacy, and the rights of free enterprise?**

We look forward to your responses to these questions as the Crown's representative responsible for the implementation and oversight of these protocols..

### Application of EP2 to Te Puni Kokiri's Business Development Programme

The key points regarding the way in which TPK applies *He Tapuae* are:

1. EP2 does not require Tūhoe hapū or organisations to go to TUT for endorsement before engaging with a government department. The only requirement is for the Crown party to advise TUT on matters pertaining to *He Tapuae*. Then it is up to the Crown to assess whether it is appropriate, or not, to then seek endorsement from TUT. It is the Crown and TUT that are bound by *He Tapuae* to take these actions, not a third party such as our organisation. **Can you explain why *He Tapuae* is being erroneously applied by TPK in the examples, to the detriment of Tūhoe hapū and organisations?**
2. Our reading of EP2 is that it simply binds the Crown party to inform TUT of matters relevant to *He Tapuae*. In the TPK case that we have cited, we agreed that TPK advise TUT of our application without divulging commercial sensitivity. But this is not how the matter was handled. We were directed to go to TUT for endorsement before TPK would reconsider our application. We objected to being directed to TUT for this endorsement as we see this requirement as a denial of our rights to engage with a government department for its programmes, just like other New Zealanders are able to do.
3. EP2 says that where appropriate endorsement can be sought from TUT and then the tribals. **Can you explain what are the criteria applied in this protocol to determine when it is appropriate to seek endorsement from TUT and then tribals? Can you also explain why a proposal for support for US market entry for a honey brand would trigger the need for endorsement through *He Tapuae* which you have suggested is**

**focused on social betterment for Tūhoe? Can you also explain what is the issue of 'co-ordination' at stake in this example. For instance, is the government or TUT through *He Tapuae* or otherwise assisting a number of honey companies of Tūhoe in the United States?**

4. Even for something as simple as Maori cadetships, TPK's stock response for a Tūhoe organisation is to go to TUT. **Can you explain please what is the issue of co-ordination at stake in this case?**
5. It is untrue that Te Puni Kokiri continued to assess our application after TUT required that TPK channel all live or new applications to TUT for endorsement. Assessment of our application was already complete at this point and our application was ready for consideration in Wellington with a recommendation to approve. TPK ultimately declined the application because we would not go to TUT for endorsement. We have described the detail of the chain of events in our original letter and can validate all of this with emails, documents and notes of phone calls. It is disappointing to receive the disjointed and flawed version of events in your letter, despite the supposed capacity of government departments to keep good records.
6. You say that TPK brokered a meeting with NZTE. This is a peculiar way of describing what actually happened. As an exporter, we have an ongoing relationship with NZTE, so have no need of TPK to facilitate our meetings with them. Actually, it was NZTE that brokered a meeting with TPK, as:
  - a. It was TPK that asked NZTE for candidates to produce urgent business proposals that would utilise TPK's underspending at the end of financial year; and
  - b. NZTE identified us as a prime candidate for TPK's purposes because they knew we were ready to move on a worthwhile export endeavour and that we could move quickly to developing a proposal within urgent time frames.
7. You state that 'based on the understanding that EP2 applied, the application could not progress without an endorsement'. We repeat that EP2 does not actually say this. It says that advising TUT is required but endorsement only applies where appropriate. **So we ask why did TPK think it appropriate to gain endorsement from TUT when EP2 does not require this? Where is the judgement of TPK? Why did TPK insist that we had to go to TUT then start the application process all over again? What would be behind such a direction from TPK?** We are asking that you address these questions please.
8. **Why was our application withdrawn? Why did not TPK not just advise TUT that the application had been made as**
  - a. **actually that is all that required by EP2**
  - b. **our CEO had actually agreed could happen.**
9. **You say that TUT requested information – what sort of information? Was it reasonable for TUT to request such information? Why did TPK not respond to that request? Did they think the request was not reasonable?** As we see it, if TUT wanted information about our application, and if it really wanted to co-ordinate initiatives in our region then at any time, it could and should talk to us directly. Instead, TPK includes TUT endorsement as part of a government process. **Is any of this reasonable in your view?**

10. It is common knowledge that TUT has been found to have acted outside the law. We note that people with criminal records are usually not employed as public servants. Yet as the government you happily include TUT staff and endorsement as part of a government process. **So tell us please what assurance do you have that TUT leaders and staff operate within the law for government's purposes and that they have the competence and ethical practice that befits assessment of applications for assistance by a government programme?**

#### Your Internal Review of Our Business Structure

We find it interesting that you commissioned a review of our structures and you ask questions as if this is relevant in some way to the issues we raised in our original letter. When we have applied for assistance from government, we have complied with requirements for the programme regarding structures. Should we ever be allowed by your protocols to seek assistance in future, we will of course explain relevant structures at that point. But to provide you with a schema for discussing with TUT through *He Tapuae* is not our purpose. Suffice to say at this point that structures and names of businesses and trusts can change just like those of governments and government departments.

#### Crown 'Investment' in the Tuawhenua Trust

We find the listing of your 'investment' in the Tuawhenua Trust and Manawa Honey a curious inclusion to your response to our letter. We are not new to any of the information listed, and we found this report did not answer any of the points that we raised in our original letter.

We thought we would empower you with more information about our achievements so you can deepen your understanding of what we have contributed to our people, our environment and the wider community, including the government.

We moved to create jobs and business in our community in about 2011 because the government and iwi structure were not doing anything in this vein.

In summary, in these years of operations we have:

1. Paid income tax of more than \$150,000
2. Paid \$1.6 million in GST on good and services
3. Delivered overseas earnings of \$680,000
4. Paid over \$3 million in wages including PAYE taxes
5. Trained and developed 40 people into jobs
6. Created and sustained jobs of 8-12 FTEs jobs ongoing
7. Paid \$1 million into the Ruatāhuna economy for contractors and other services.
8. Paid \$100,000 into the government's Kiwisaver scheme
9. Paid ACC levies of over \$40,000
10. Paid \$50,000 in scholarships to support tertiary education for our young people
11. Raised or donated over \$250,000 for charitable purposes

12. *Inter alia*, undertaken forest enhancement programmes involved planting of 4000 seedling podocarps and 10,000 seedlings of other species.

We have built our trust's business from scratch, without the backing of an original trust or settlement fund or established business. It's taken years of koha contribution and hard work from trustees, hapū, whanau and friends, and yes we have also received some input from government, for which we are grateful.

### Looking to the Future

We wonder why would you suggest that you might facilitate a meeting with Tāmāti Kruger? The issues that we raise do not pertain to a relationship with Tāmāti Kruger or TUT - the issue, as we have clearly explained, is about government signing up to and applying *He Tapuae* to trample hapū and citizen rights.

If we look to the future, this is the issue that needs to be addressed - the terms of *He Tapuae* and practices adopted by government departments under this agreement.

Overall, we found your letter did not address the key issues we raised in our original letter on these matters, so we are summarising for you again:

1. The requirement for Tuhoe hapū and organisations to gain endorsement from TUT for applications to government department programmes is a transgression of New Zealand citizens rights. **Do you or do you not agree with this statement?**
2. Additionally, we would add that this requirement denies the exercise of hapū autonomy to which the Crown is supposed to be committed under the Tuhoe settlement. **Do you or do you not agree with this statement?**
3. *He Tapuae* is being applied to direct third parties that were not part of the agreement, who object to the agreement and who were not consulted in the design or signing of the agreement. **On what basis does the government consider that this is a fair way to operate?**

### Conclusion

The objectives cited for *He Tapuae* about 'co-ordination' have become a smoke screen for TUT's admitted intention of stopping others from gaining government funding and for impeding development by Tuhoe organisations in our region.

You say in your conclusion that EP2 **requires co-ordination** when instead Crown agencies are **requiring pre-endorsment**, whether appropriate or not. Clearly the protocols and practice are not lining up.

**Can you explain why the government is not acknowledging and addressing these issues?**

We have many questions in this letter, not to be vexatious, but to seek clarification and understanding of what the government is thinking and intending, and how this all aligns with what is actually happening in government's process and practice.

We look forward to your response.

Nga mihi na nga Kaitiaki o Tuawhenua

A blue ink signature, appearing to be 'Richard Tamarae', written in a cursive style.

Richard Tamarae (Chair)

A black ink signature, appearing to be 'Hekenoa Te Kurapa', written in a cursive style.

Hekenoa Te Kurapa (Trustee)

A blue ink signature, appearing to be 'Brenda Tahi', written in a cursive style.

Brenda Tahi (Executive Trustee)

A blue ink signature, appearing to be 'Hinerau Rameka', written in a cursive style.

Hinerau Rameka (Trustee)

A blue ink signature, appearing to be 'Puke Timoti', written in a cursive style.

Puke Timoti (Trustee)

A black ink signature, appearing to be 'Rangi Matamua', written in a cursive style.

Rangi Matamua (Trustee)

## ATTACHMENT 1: TPK Stock Email Response for Tūhoe Organisations

**From:** Mailbox - RPO - Waikato-Waiariki <[MailboxWaikato@tpk.govt.nz](mailto:MailboxWaikato@tpk.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, 20 February 2024 11:38 AM

**To:** [brenda@tuawhenua.biz](mailto:brenda@tuawhenua.biz)

**Subject:** RE: Initial Enquiry Form

Tēnā koe Brenda,

Ngā mihi o te wā.

Thank you for your enquiry for Te Puni Kōkiri investment funding.

Te Puni Kōkiri is a Crown agency, and cognisant of the He Tapuae - Service Management Plan which is part of the Crowns obligations under the Treaty Settlement with Ngai Tūhoe. The He Tapuae – Service Management Plan includes key relationship protocols that Crown agencies are expected to understand and work towards managing the agreed protocols. Te Puni Kōkiri as a Crown agency, along with other agencies is also expected to work to these protocols.

Moving forward, all Ngai Tūhoe existing and future enquiries/applications for investment funding to Te Puni Kōkiri will be considered through the He Tapuae – Service Management Plan protocols to ensure the Crowns obligations under the Treaty Settlement with Ngai Tūhoe are maintained.

To progress your application for potential funding, Te Puni Kōkiri requires you to actively seek endorsement for your application from Te Uru Taumatua which is the PSGE entity that manages the obligations and responsibilities for the He Tapuae – Service Management Plan protocols. When endorsement is acquired, we will progress your application through the various programme funding criteria for potential investment.

The contact person at Te Uru Taumatua is: Waikare Kruger [Waikare@ngaituhoe.iwi.nz](mailto:Waikare@ngaituhoe.iwi.nz)

Nga Mihi,

**Hinepau Peka**

**Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti  
Tūwharetoa, Tūhourangi/Ngāti  
Wāhiao, Mataatua.**

*Administrator | Kaihāpai*

**Te Puni Kōkiri, Waikato-Waiariki**



**Te Puni Kōkiri**  
MINISTRY OF MĀORI DEVELOPMENT

*Tauwaea DDI : 0800 875 499 | Waea Pūkoro M : 027 228 9019*

*Waea Whakaahua F : 0800 875 329*

**Te Puni Kōkiri** 6 Tarawera Road, Lynmore, Rotorua 3010, Aotearoa

PO Box 12005, Rotorua South, Rotorua 3045, Aotearoa



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Out of scope

**From:** Marama Edwards <Marama.Edwards026@msd.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 10, 2025 2:57 PM

**To:** brenda@tuawhenua.biz

**Cc:** heke.tekurapa@gmail.com; puketimoti@gmail.com; peura01@gmail.com;  
rangimataamua@gmail.com; hinzrameka@gmail.com

**Subject:** RE: IN-CONFIDENCE: Tuawhenua Trust's Issues with Government Adoption and Implementation of He Tapuae

Kia ora Brenda me koutou ma

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate the time you've taken to outline your concerns and experiences and I hope this response provides some clarity on a potential pathway forward.

You've expressed concern about my ability to objectively consider the matters raised, given my role as Chair of the government committee overseeing He Tapuae. I want to clarify that my role is focused on ensuring the Crown meets its obligations under He Tapuae and that the integrity of the agreement is upheld — both in intent and in practice. While I help explain Crown processes, I do not hold any decision-making authority over other agencies or their operational decisions.

You've provided detailed examples of how Engagement Protocol 2 (EP2) is being applied, particularly by Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK). I understand your concern that the requirement for endorsement from Te Uru Taumatua (TUT) may be going beyond what EP2 actually requires. To help clarify this, I will follow up directly with Te Puni Kōkiri to review how EP2 and EP3 are being interpreted and applied in practice.

To better support you and ensure the correct application of protocols, it would be helpful to have further information about your business structures (as per my letter of 13 December 2024). This will help me understand which protocols may or may not apply, and how best to provide advice.

In the interests of being helpful, I am also open to facilitating a meeting between your Trust and Te Uru Taumatua (TUT), should you wish. In advance of such a meeting, I would propose that the content of your letter is shared with TUT for transparency of the issues needing resolution. My hope is that this approach would support greater clarity of the issues and provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue.



Thank you again for raising these matters. I look forward to receiving further information about your entity's structure to help determine which protocols apply. Please also let me know if you would like to proceed with a meeting with TUT, so that arrangements can be made accordingly.

Mauriora

## Mārama Edwards

Manahautū - Whakairinga Tūmanako o Māori, o Hapori, o Rangapū  
Deputy Chief Executive for Māori, Communities and Partnerships  
Ministry of Social Development | [www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz) | PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140



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Manaaki Tangata, Manaaki Whānau*

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**From:** [brenda@tuawhenua.biz](mailto:brenda@tuawhenua.biz) <[brenda@tuawhenua.biz](mailto:brenda@tuawhenua.biz)>

**Sent:** Sunday, August 31, 2025 7:13 PM

**To:** Marama Edwards <[Marama.Edwards026@msd.govt.nz](mailto:Marama.Edwards026@msd.govt.nz)>

**Cc:** [heke.tekurapa@gmail.com](mailto:heke.tekurapa@gmail.com); [puketimoti@gmail.com](mailto:puketimoti@gmail.com); [peura01@gmail.com](mailto:peura01@gmail.com); [rangimataamua@gmail.com](mailto:rangimataamua@gmail.com); [hinzrameka@gmail.com](mailto:hinzrameka@gmail.com)

**Subject:** IN-CONFIDENCE: Tuawhenua Trust's Issues with Government Adoption and Implementation of He Tapuae

Tena koe Marama

Please find attached our response to your letter of 13 December 2024.

If you would like clarification on any matter or would like to discuss please do not hesitate to call me on 07 3663 166.

Nga mihi naku noa na Brenda

**Brenda Tahi, Executive Trustee | Tuawhenua Trust | 363a Mataatua Road, Ruatahuna 3079 | P: +64 7 3663 166 | W: [www.tuawhenua.biz](http://www.tuawhenua.biz)**

**Founder of [Manawa Honey NZ](#)**

**Administering the [Tuawhenua Forest Fund](#)**

**Certified [B Corp](#) since 2022**



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**From:** Marama Edwards <[Marama.Edwards026@msd.govt.nz](mailto:Marama.Edwards026@msd.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Friday, 13 December 2024 9:11 PM

**To:** [brenda@tuawhenua.biz](mailto:brenda@tuawhenua.biz); [heke.tekurapa@gmail.com](mailto:heke.tekurapa@gmail.com); [puketimoti@gmail.com](mailto:puketimoti@gmail.com); [peura01@gmail.com](mailto:peura01@gmail.com); [rangimataamua@gmail.com](mailto:rangimataamua@gmail.com); [hinzrameka@gmail.com](mailto:hinzrameka@gmail.com)

**Subject:** He Tapuae

IN-CONFIDENCE

Tēnā koutou

Please find attached a response to your letter from July 2024 regarding He Tapuae.

Mauriora

### **Mārama Edwards**

Manahautū - Whakairinga Tūmanako o Māori, o Hapori, o Rāngapū  
Deputy Chief Executive for Māori, Communities and Partnerships  
Ministry of Social Development | [www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz) | PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140



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