NEW ZEALAND GAME ANIMAL COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, communities, commerce and conservation.

Game Animal Council
NEW ZEALAND



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Mō ō tātau wairua, mō ō tātau oranga, mō ō tātau whānau, e whakarato mai ana te taiao.

The natural environment provides sustenance for our spirit, our wellbeing and our families.

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FOREWORD
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I was pleased to be appointed as Chair of the NZ Game Animal Council (GAC) from 1 July 2026. The past year has seen significant progress in the GAC's work to improve hunting and game animal management, alongside preparations for the Council to take on new responsibilities associated with Herds of Special Interest (HOSI). It is a privilege to lead the Council as it builds on that progress and enters its next phase.

I'd like to acknowledge outgoing Chair Grant Dodson's six years of service, together with the contribution of retiring Council members John Cook and Andrew Simpson. Grant's leadership helped the GAC mature into a stronger and more capable statutory body. I also welcome new Council members Jim Goodall, Bruce McKenzie and Paula Bennett, and look forward to working with the full Council as we build on the progress made. The past year has been significant for the GAC. Growing public and media attention on deer populations has highlighted the importance of effective, adaptive, and collaborative management that considers how local communities value game animals while also responsibly managing their impacts.

HOSI present an important opportunity to demonstrate what proactive, collaborative and adaptive management can achieve, and the GAC undertook significant work during the year to support their establishment and prepare for its future role in their management.

The GAC has an important contribution to make to New Zealand. With the support of the hunting sector, we will continue to build productive partnerships and demonstrate what effective game animal management can achieve. With 2026 being a General Election year, the GAC stands ready to work constructively with whichever government leads New Zealand over the next three years.

There is much to do, and with the work comes real opportunity. Together, we can help shape a future where hunting is valued, game animals are responsibly managed, and the contribution of hunters to New Zealand's environment, communities and heritage is recognised.



Ngā mihi nui,

Matt Clarke
Chair, NZ Game Animal Council



ABOUT THE GAC

Legal name: The Game Animal Council

Entity type: Independent statutory body established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 (GAC Act).

The GAC is a national body working to improve the management of hunting and game animals for the benefit of all stakeholders. It was established to help address the conflicts that had challenged the administration of game animals in New Zealand.

The management of game animals in New Zealand reflects the influence of societal attitudes, research and scientific knowledge, advances in technology, and government policies. Game animals are viewed variously as an asset for tourism; a recreational sport resource; a food source; wild animals to be controlled or eradicated; valued introduced species; pests; the basis of a wild venison export industry; a part of the farmed livestock industry; and a resource for industries based on professional guiding and trophy hunting.

The GAC provides an opportunity to secure the future of game animals as valued introduced species, and hunting by embodying modern management principles and attitudes whilst remaining mindful of New Zealand's unique situation with respect to the conservation of native species.

OUR VISION

Sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, communities, commerce and conservation.

OUR PURPOSE

To achieve the sustainable management of game animals and hunting by fulfilling the functions of the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

OUR MISSION

To liaise with communities, mana whenua, government and other stakeholders to develop enduring solutions to achieve the sustainable management of game animals and hunting.

TIKANGA WHAKAHAERE/ OUR VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Kotahitanga (promoting togetherness). We work together to achieve our common goals.
- Manaakitanga (showing respect and care for people). When engaging with people, individually and collectively, we ensure that all our activities are conducted in a way that is mana-enhancing for those involved and reflects the values of fairness, respect and consideration.
- Whakapapa (the connection between all of us and our ancestors). We continually strive to better understand and contribute to the mātauranga (knowledge) continuum that binds us to one another across generations.
- Whanaungatanga (connection between people). The full potential of our work is realised through working together as a whānau, which encourages us to celebrate our common interests, applaud our diversity and reinforce connections with our wide group of stakeholders.
- Pūkengatanga (expertise). Collectively we have a wide range of skills and expertise that we use to achieve our outcomes.
- Kaitiakitanga (guardianship). Our guardianship is exercised by practising and promoting good stewardship of both native and valued introduced species (our taonga) and the habitats where they exist.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

The GAC's activities are directed by a set of legislated functions in relation to game animals, as set out in the GAC Act:

- To advise and make recommendations to the Minister.
- To provide information and education to the hunting sector.
- To promote safety initiatives for the hunting sector, including firearms safety.
- To advise private landowners on hunting.
- To develop, on its own initiative or at the direction of the Minister, voluntary codes of practice for hunting.
- To raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector.
- To liaise with hunters, hunting organisations, representatives of tangata whenua, local authorities, landowners, the New Zealand Conservation Authority, conservation boards, and the Department of Conservation to improve hunting opportunities.
- To conduct research, including research on the hunting of game animals.
- In respect of herds of special interest for which the Minister has delegated management powers under section 20 to the Council, -
  - To undertake management functions that are compatible with the management of public conservation land and resources generally; and
  - To exercise its powers for the effective management of the herd:
- To operate voluntary certification schemes for professional hunting guides and game estates.
- To promote minimum standards and codes of conduct for certified hunting guides and game estates.
- To investigate complaints and take disciplinary action in relation to certified hunting guides and game estates.
- To provide any other services to hunters that the Minister is satisfied are ancillary to the Council's other functions.
- To perform any other functions conferred on it under this Act or any other enactment.
- To assess the costs of managing herds of special interest and make recommendations to the Minister on ways to recover those costs.

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

The GAC approved its first five-year strategic plan in 2019 and updated that plan in 2023. The strategic plan provides the strategic framework against which progress is reported in this annual report.

The GAC's strategic plan provides structure, direction and focus towards achieving the functions as set out in the GAC Act by:

- Ensuring the GAC remains compliant with legislation and regulatory frameworks.
- Informing the GAC's wider policy and strategy development.
- Supporting the GAC to strengthen and improve governance and administration.
- Enabling the GAC to identify priority areas.
- Providing a framework for accountability.

The summary below outlines progress towards the GAC's strategic intentions.

Strategic objective	Progress made
Provide well-considered advice and recommendations to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing on matters relating to game animals and hunting.	The GAC provided extensive advice and recommendations on game animal management and hunting, including HOSI, tahr management, hunting access, firearms legislation and other policy and legislative matters with a focus on appropriately recognising hunter, hunting and game animal values.
Develop positive relationships between the Game Animal Council and stakeholders through effective liaison, advice, and communication	The GAC continued to build and maintain relationships across the hunting, conservation and government sectors through regular liaison, advice and collaboration on game animal management and hunting issues.
Enhance the quality of game animal herds while maintaining or enhancing conservation outcomes.	The GAC developed the first two HOSI proposals, working collaboratively with the Minister, the Department of Conservation (DOC), hunting organisations and other parties. The GAC provided significant advice and expertise to support the statutory designation process and development of herd management plans that integrate hunting and conservation objectives.
Raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector.	The GAC actively engaged with hunters and hunting organisations and reflected sector perspectives in its advice, submissions and engagement with the Minister, government agencies and other stakeholders.
Promote hunter safety and education.	The GAC's online hunter training platform - Better Hunting - has provided New Zealand's only free hunter safety and education resource since its launch in 2023. Ongoing development of the platform supports hunter capability, responsible hunting practices and safety.
Improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe and legitimate activity and game animals as valued introduced species.	Through its communications, research and engagement, the GAC has continued to raise awareness of the contribution hunting and game animals make to conservation, wildlife management, recreation, communities and the economy.
Promote standards for hunting and management of game animals.	Through hunter education, best-practice guidance, research, HOSI work and the promotion of science-informed management, the GAC continued to encourage high standards in hunting, stewardship and game animal management, in collaboration with the hunting sector.
Develop and uphold appropriate governance and management mechanisms.	The GAC continued to strengthen its governance and organisational planning, including reviewing its strategic direction and developing a new organisational strategy to take effect from 1 July 2026.

In 2025-2026, the GAC reviewed and refreshed its strategic plan, adopting the new organisational strategy, effective 1 July 2026. The organisational strategy builds on its previous strategic plan. It consolidates the previous strategic priorities into four overarching output areas - hunters and hunting, game animals, social licence, and organisation. The GAC will be reporting progress against the refreshed organisational strategy in the next annual report.

ASSESSMENT OF OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

The GAC's operational priorities are set out in the 2025-2026 GAC Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE). The SPE reflects the GAC's statutory functions under the GAC Act, the strategic priorities set by the Council, and the Government through the Minister's annual Letter of Expectations (LOE).

MINISTER'S LETTER OF EXPECTATIONS

The Hon Todd McClay, then Minister for Hunting and Fishing, issued the 2025-2026 LOE to the GAC on 18 November 2024. The expectations included:

- Work with the Department and other stakeholders to support the designation of HOSI over the remainder of this parliamentary term.
- Support the Department's work on valued introduced species.
- Continue to work with the Department to implement Te Ara ki Mua and seek to improve both wild animal and game animal management.
- Liaise with the Department on improvements to managed access for hunters and improving the recreational hunting permit system for game animal hunting on public conservation land, as outlined in the Access Charter for Recreational Hunting and Fishing on Public Conservation and Waters.
- Undertake research on hunter's contributions to conservation in New Zealand.
- Continue the development of hunter safety and education initiatives for the hunting sector.

The GAC's work during 2025-2026 addressed these expectations through delivery of its statutory functions, strategic objectives and SPE. Significant areas of work included establishment of the first two HOSI, providing advice that recognises hunting and game animals as valued, advancing hunter education, highlighted hunter access challenges, undertaking research on hunters/hunting, and working collaboratively with hunting, conservation and government organisations.

BUDGET SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS

No significant Budget 2025-2026 items to report.

ASSESSMENT OF OPERATIONS

During 2025-2026 the GAC delivered a broad programme of work to improve hunting and game animal management in New Zealand within its available funding.

This annual report assesses the GAC's performance against the measures in the 2025-2026 SPE.1

This section includes icons to show how work is progressing on the GAC meeting its strategic objectives:

	**Advise**	Provide well-considered advice and recommendations to the Minister on matters relating to game animals and hunting.
	**Relationships**	Develop positive relationships between the Game Animal Council and stakeholders through effective liaison, advice and communication.
	**Enhance**	Enhance the quality of game animal herds while maintaining or enhancing conservation outcomes.
	**Advocate**	Raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector.
	**Safety**	Promote hunter safety and education.
	**Value**	Improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe and legitimate activity, and game animals as valued introduced species.
	**Standards**	Promote standards for hunting and management of game animals.
	**Governance**	Develop and uphold appropriate governance and management mechanisms.

PROVIDING ADVICE TO THE MINISTER

The GAC provided advice to the Minister that contributed to significant progress in game animal management, including the policy, legislative, and operational work that supported the establishment of the first two HOSI and the development of future proposals such as tahr.

Through its advice on HOSI implementation, game animal management, and deer population pressures, the GAC supported a shift toward managing game animals as valued introduced species, balancing hunting and conservation outcomes, and promoting regionally tailored management approaches. The Council also provided sound information on hunter perspectives to the Minister through Hunter Insights research and ongoing engagement with hunting organisations, helping to ensure decision-making was informed by those directly contributing to and affected by game animal management in New Zealand.

The GAC has also provided practical advice on long-standing issues affecting hunting, including recreational hunting areas (RHAs), wild animal recovery operations (WARO), and firearms law reform. This advice sought to improve hunting opportunities and coordination, recognise hunting and game animal values and enable responsible hunters to contribute to game animal management and conservation outcomes while undertaking the safe and lawful use of firearms.

IMPROVING POLICY

Drawing on its policy, planning, legal, scientific and game animal management expertise, the GAC provides submissions, advice and recommendations and engages with the hunting sector to ensure hunter and hunting values are appropriately reflected.

In 2025-2026, the GAC contributed significant expert and legal advice to three major legislative reforms affecting hunting and game animal management:

1. Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Bill

The Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Bill addressed aspects of the legislative framework for establishing and managing HOSI, including the legislative barrier to the designation of HOSI within national parks. The GAC contributed its statutory expertise and advice during the legislative process, drawing on its knowledge of game animal management and hunter, hunting and game animal values.

In its advice on the Amendment Bill, the GAC supported the Bill and the intent behind it, seeking to ensure that valued introduced species and hunting are properly recognised across conservation legislation and policy, so New Zealand can effectively protect national parks and the wildlife they support.

2. Conservation Amendment Bill

The Conservation Amendment Bill is relevant to hunting and game animal management because it provides an opportunity to strengthen recognition of hunting as a legitimate and valued use of public conservation land, improve consideration of hunting access in conservation decision-making, and better recognise the contribution hunters make to conservation, regional economies, and communities.

In its advice on the Conservation Amendment Bill, the GAC advocated for hunting interests and game animal management to be more explicitly considered in conservation planning and management processes. This included improving access to public conservation land and recognising the value of introduced game animals, while ensuring that hunting and game animal management are appropriately considered alongside conservation objectives.

3. Arms Bill

Firearms are an essential tool for recreational hunting, game animal management, hunting tourism, and commercial wild animal recovery. Recreational hunters play an important role in managing deer and wild pig populations across New Zealand. The regulatory framework therefore has a direct bearing on the ability of hunters and other legitimate users to undertake these activities safely and lawfully.

In its advice on the Arms Bill, the GAC supported firearms regulation that provides appropriate safeguards for public safety while enabling responsible hunters to obtain and use firearms without unnecessary regulatory barriers. The GAC's advice emphasised the importance of enabling legitimate firearms use for hunting and game animal management, and the contribution these activities make to recreational, conservation, and regional outcomes.

List of submissions

Submissions made in 2025-2026 include:

- Horizons Regional Council – Regional Pest Management Plan Review (May 2026)
- GAC advice on the draft Tahr Control Operational Plan 2026-2027 (April 2026)
- Amendments to the Arms Regulations (March 2026)
- Joint outdoor recreation sector submission on the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill (March 2026)
- GAC Submission on the Arms Bill (February 2026)
- GAC advice on the development of the Tahr Control Operational Plan 2026-2027 (January 2026)
- Draft Wapiti Herd of Special Interest herd management plan (December 2025)
  - Appendix: requested changes to the Wapiti HOSI herd management plan
  - Marked up changes to the Wapiti HOSI herd management plan
- Draft Sika HOSI herd management plan (December 2025)
  - Appendix: requested changes to the Sika HOSI herd management plan
  - Marked up changes to the Sika HOSI herd management plan
- National TB Plan Review (October 2025)
- OSPRI National Aerial Operations Plan 2026 (September 2025)
- SWDC Paper Road Access Bylaw (August 2025)
- DOC National Conservation Policy Statement proposal (August 2025)
- DOC Kahurangi National Park proposed aerial predator control 2025-2027 (August 2025)
- Online Casino Gambling Bill (August 2025)
- Game Animal Council (Herds of Special Interest) Amendment Bill (July 2025)
- MPI on Homekill Recreational Catch proposals through targeted consultation.
- Fast-track applications under the fast-track approval regime.

Preparation of the GAC's submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill (July 2026) was undertaken in 2025-2026. The submission was lodged on 1 July 2026.

HERDS OF SPECIAL INTEREST/HOSI

A HOSI is a herd of game animals on public conservation land that has been formally designated by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing to be managed for hunting, while ensuring conservation values continue to be protected.

The ability to designate a HOSI is only possible through the GAC Act which is the first piece of legislation in New Zealand to recognise and manage game animals as valued introduced species.

In 2025-2026, the GAC worked collaboratively with the Minister and his office, DOC, the Central North Island Sika Foundation and the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, providing significant liaison, information and advice to support the establishment of New Zealand's first two HOSI.

Key HOSI work included:

- Hunting sector engagement to support GAC advice and HOSI implementation.
- Development of a values-based draft HOSI herd management plan framework under the GAC Act to support the statutory process.
- Comprehensive submissions on the Sika and Wapiti HOSI herd management plans.
- Advice to DOC on delegations of HOSI management powers under the GAC Act.
- Formal advice to the Minister on:
- Delegation of HOSI management powers under the GAC Act.
- Draft herd management plans.
- The interpretation and application of the "overriding considerations" in the GAC Act (including independent legal advice received).
- Undertaking HOSI communications and engagement.
- Drafting of an operational plan for the Sika HOSI to guide implementation of the herd management plan and provide a template for other HOSI operational plans.
- Planning for Sika HOSI herd management, monitoring, hunter engagement, reporting, Treaty partner engagement, delivery arrangements, and the practical implications of delegated management powers.
- Liaison with the NZ Tahr Foundation, Heritage Red Deer Foundation, and Rakiura Whitetail Trust to provide information and support in exploring possible future HOSI.

The GAC's specialist game animal management expertise, understanding of hunter and hunting values, technical advice and implementation planning helped ensure that practical management considerations were reflected alongside conservation requirements.

MANAGING GAME ANIMALS AS VALUED INTRODUCED SPECIES/TE ARA KI MUA

The GAC is recognised as a partner, alongside DOC and whānau, hapū, and iwi, for the implementation of Te Ara ki Mua, an adaptive framework for managing goats, deer, pigs, tahr, and chamois that gives effect to Te Mana o te Taiao – Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (ANZBS).

Game animals provide value to New Zealand communities as a recreational, community and commercial resource and are therefore recognised as valued introduced species2 in the ANZBS, which states:

Reaching a balance to ensure that valued introduced species continue to provide the benefits they are valued for, while also ensuring that indigenous biodiversity thrives, is a key challenge for Aotearoa New Zealand.

The GAC has long supported place-based approaches to game animal management that recognises hunting and game animals as valued. This approach is applied across all the GAC's work and is consistent with the ANZBS goal of balancing the benefits provided by valued introduced species with the protection of indigenous biodiversity.

OSPRI'S NATIONAL AERIAL OPERATIONS PLAN

The GAC has a constructive working relationship with OSPRI and its staff, meeting quarterly to discuss upcoming operations and to consider mitigation measures to reduce impacts on the hunting sector and communities relating to TBfree operations. The GAC made a submission on OSPRI's 2025-2026 National Aerial Operations Plan, supporting the goal of eradicating bovine TB from New Zealand while identifying operations where mitigation measures were advisable to reduce impacts on hunter access to valued public-land game animal resources and game meat provision to local communities, and to address statutory obligations relating to poison application and animal welfare.

TAHR MANAGEMENT

The GAC continues to promote tahr management that supports regional and national recreational, economic and conservation interests, delivers improved management performance and efficiencies and advances cost recovery opportunities.

The GAC is a representative on the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group, provided advice to DOC on the annual Tahr Control Operational Plan and at the mid-point review of this plan. The GAC's advice focused on game animal management principles, appropriate planning and reporting, robust science-informed decision-making and lawful compliance with the statutory framework for tahr management. The GAC also engaged with members of the hunting sector to ensure its advice appropriately reflected sector views.

The GAC also began working with the New Zealand Tahr Foundation on the development of a proposal to establish a Tahr HOSI, exploring how a HOSI could provide for the management of tahr as a valued introduced species while protecting conservation values.

WILD ANIMAL RECOVERY OPERATIONS/ AERIALLY ASSISTED TROPHY HUNTING

The GAC represents the interests of both recreational and commercial hunting and promotes better coordination between these activities to support hunting opportunities, industry stability, sustainable game animal management and conservation outcomes.

In 2025-2026, the GAC advocated for a review of wild animal recovery operations to reduce recreational/commercial hunting conflict and enable better game animal management and conservation outcomes. The GAC also worked with DOC to prepare a joint brief to the Minister on opportunities to improve administration and coordination of wild animal recovery operations within current policy settings.

The GAC provided DOC with advice during the aerially assisted trophy hunting permit review and developed a science-based engagement approach, to jointly (with DOC) engage with stakeholders to identify opportunities for improvements to the concessions process and to inform the permit review.

STEWART ISLAND/RAKIURA

During 2025-2026, GAC engaged with the Rakiura community and heard that white-tailed deer and hunting are an important part of local culture, businesses and food gathering. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of managing this valued game animal resource alongside the protection of indigenous species.

The GAC provided expert advice to Zero Invasive Predators, DOC and others on the deer-repellent trial and opportunities to reduce non-target impacts on the valued Rakiura white-tailed deer herd while supporting predator-control initiatives.

The GAC also supported the Rakiura Whitetail Trust in engaging with mana whenua, the local community and hunters on what improved herd management for Rakiura white-tailed deer could look like and what further information would be needed to achieve this. This work is ongoing and contributes to exploring a future HOSI.

SUPPORTING LANDHOLDERS

Landholders have increasingly sought support with managing game animals on private property. In carrying out its statutory function to advise private landowners on game animals, the GAC has developed advice and resources to support integrated and coordinated game animal management.

This included developing a landholder toolbox to support game animal management decisions, including how hunters can contribute, and an online platform to help private landholders connect with hunters. These resources are intended to support game animal management on private land while also improving opportunities for hunter access. They will be piloted with landholders in 2026-2027.

DELIVERING HUNTER EDUCATION

The GAC provides New Zealand's only free online hunter training platform, Better Hunting. Established in 2023 with the support of approximately 24 organisations, Better Hunting fills a gap in the education pathway between a new or inexperienced hunter gaining a firearms licence and undertaking practical training.

Providing quality education helps develop safer, more responsible, and more effective hunters. By building knowledge of conservation, ethical harvesting, and outdoor safety, Better Hunting contributes to sustainable game animal management and safer participation in hunting.

In 2025-2026, the GAC developed a Hunter Education Strategic Plan to guide the future development and delivery of Better Hunting and its wider hunter education work. The plan provides a framework for the future development of this work and supports the GAC's statutory functions to provide information and education and promote safety initiatives for the hunting sector.

The GAC also continues to work with sector groups and relevant agencies to keep Better Hunting current and fit for purpose.

Key additions and achievements during 2025-2026 included:

- A tahr ageing game developed with support from the NZ Tahr Foundation to help identify the age and sex of tahr and support informed harvest decisions.
- A Tahr Ballot Briefing developed with support from the NZ Tahr Foundation and DOC, to help hunters make informed decisions that contribute to positive hunting and conservation outcomes, including female harvest.
- A 'Welcome to Hunting in New Zealand' module for international hunters covering essential regulations and permissions, firearms, permits and land access, New Zealand terrain and weather, hunting and outdoor safety, conservation and game management environment, and biosecurity.
- A blaze game designed to increase awareness of the importance of wearing blaze clothing and improve hunter safety.
- A range induction module developed in partnership with Wellington NZDA, covering safety, standards and requirements for accessing the range and designed so it can be adapted for use by other ranges around the country.
- An instant feedback function allowing users to comment while using the platform. This has received good uptake, with positive and constructive feedback helping inform ongoing improvements.

The GAC has begun adding audio narration across the Better Hunting platform to improve accessibility and support different learning styles.

Outside of Better Hunting, the GAC has worked with Firearms Safety and Education to develop information specifically for international visitors wanting to use a firearm in New Zealand for hunting.

SUPPORTING WILD GAME MEAT DONATION

In 2025-2026, the GAC developed Hunt and Share, an online meat platform providing tools and guidance to support safe and traceable wild game meat donation that can be tracked from hill to table.

Hunt and Share includes a guidebook for organisers of game meat donation initiatives, an online knowledge check for hunters, and tools to support record keeping and traceability. Together, these resources provide a practical framework to help hunters and community organisations manage donated game meat safely and responsibly.

Hunt and Share is used by the Wild Game Recovery Trust's meat donation initiative – Game Changer NZ – which coordinates the full donation process, working with hunters, butchers and foodbanks, and raises financial donations to help cover the cost of processing donated wild game meat such as venison.

The successful launch of Hunt and Share has made it easier for hunters to donate wild game meat safely to communities in need by providing a system to support donation and traceability. The programme demonstrates the value of hunting and game animals and supports hunters to contribute directly to their communities. The GAC continues to work with the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Salvation Army and other sector and community partners to support wild game meat donation.

ASSESSING HUNTING ACTIVITY AND ECONOMICS – NZ GAME ANIMAL HUNTING RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2025-2026, the GAC finalised results from its Game Animal Hunting Research Project, which seeks to update the 2014 Kerr & Abell research, Big game hunting in New Zealand: per capita effort, harvest and expenditure in 2011–2012.

The GAC collected a substantial dataset on hunter demographics, behaviour, motivations, harvest and economic contribution. The research drew on 1,457 usable demographic survey responses, and 5,659 usable monthly responses across the year.

The findings were reported to the Council, with a public report being prepared for release in 2026-2027.

Some highlighted key findings include:

- Enjoying the outdoors and gathering meat were the most important reasons reported for recreational hunting.
- Recreational hunters support responsible game animal management and make a major contribution through harvest.
- Recreational hunting is a significant economic contributor to New Zealand.
- Nearly a third of hunters surveyed participate in conservation activities.

This research provides an updated evidence base to inform the GAC's advice, education, engagement and game animal management work.

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Engagement with the hunting sector, government agencies and other stakeholders helps the GAC undertake its functions effectively.

The GAC worked closely with DOC throughout 2025-2026, including regular engagement with the Wild Animal Management Team and other DOC staff. Key areas of collaboration included Sika and Wapiti HOSI planning and implementation, recreational hunting permits, aerially assisted trophy hunting, tahr management, predator control and other game animal management issues. GAC also participated in relevant DOC-led advisory and coordination groups and invited DOC representatives to Council meetings to provide updates and discuss matters of mutual interest.

The GAC continued regular engagement with hunting sector organisations and leaders, including the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, Central North Island Sika Foundation, New Zealand Tahr Foundation and Hunters for Conservation. In February 2026, GAC hosted a New Zealand Hunting Sector Leaders Network meeting, bringing sector leaders together to discuss shared priorities and issues affecting hunting and game animal management.

The GAC also participated in relevant cross-sector forums, including the Animal Welfare Network Aotearoa and Land Safety Forum, provided expert advice to the SPCA and continued engagement with landholders and other stakeholders and collaborated with the Wild Game Recovery Trust/Game Changer NZ and The Salvation Army on community wild game meat donation.

The GAC attended and participated in a range of sector events during 2025-2026 including the 2025 Sika Show, Fish & Game New Zealand Parliamentary Hunt, Hunters for Conservation event at Parliament, NZDA events, Recreation Aotearoa Hui, and Sika Roadshow activities and meetings in Taupō. The GAC also hosted the 2025 GAC Parliamentary Hunt and the 2026 International Deer Biology Congress Field Trip. These events provided opportunities to engage directly with hunters, sector organisations, government agencies and other stakeholders

The Chair and CEO also undertook targeted stakeholder engagement in Southland and Rakiura, including with Fish & Game New Zealand, the Rakiura Hunter Camps Charitable Trust, Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, Southland Conservation Board and DOC. The Rakiura visit included briefings on Predator Free Rakiura, predator-control work, and the pukunui/Southern dotterel project, helping inform the GAC's work on white-tailed deer management and predator-control impacts.

The GAC continued its relationship with Te Tari Pūreke (Firearms Safety Authority) through membership of the Firearms Community Advisory Forum, contributing a hunting-sector perspective to firearms safety matters affecting recreational and commercial hunters. The GAC also participated in the Community Firearms Training Programme, working alongside representatives from the firearms, hunting and training sectors to support development of the programme. During 2025-2026, this included regular working-group meetings, participation in an initial trial training exercise, and engagement with hunting organisations and mana whenua to encourage potential training providers to participate in the programme. Council was also represented on the Māori Firearms Forum, supporting engagement on firearms safety and training relevant to Māori hunters and communities.

Other engagement included a presentation to the NZDA Hutt Valley Branch and participation in a Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research workshop to help identify research priorities for improving game animal management.



REPRESENTING THE VIEWS OF HUNTERS

In 2025-2026, the GAC undertook a range of surveys and engagement to better understand hunters' priorities, concerns and views to improve hunting and game animal management in New Zealand. This included:

1. Stakeholder engagement survey.
2. Hunter survey at the 2025 Sika Show.
3. Hunter survey at the 2026 Ballingers Hunting Expo.
4. Hunting sector leaders survey and subsequent NZ Hunting Sector Briefing: Hunting and Game Animal Management (which was provided to all main political parties).

Three key themes emerged from the feedback:

Access: Feedback emphasised the importance of access to hunting and to hunters' ability to contribute to game animal management, conservation, and providing meat for whānau. Hunters supported protecting and improving access, alongside improved herd and habitat quality, appropriate firearms settings, and continued investment in hunter education, safety and training.

Game animal management: Feedback supported management approaches that recognise hunters, hunting and game animals alongside conservation outcomes. Hunters expressed strong support for sustainable management approaches that involve hunters and communities, including progressing HOSI, and improving coordination between recreational hunting and other management methods. Feedback also supported a stronger role for the GAC in representing the hunting sector and contributing to game animal management.

Collaboration is seen as essential, with strong support for deeper cooperation between hunters, communities, and agencies at local, regional and national levels. Hunter-led management was seen as an important way for hunters and communities to become active partners in planning and delivering effective game animal management.

The feedback provides clear direction for the GAC to support improved access, provide coordination and leadership, and advocate for recognition of hunter values and their contribution as conservation partners.

INTERNATIONAL DEER BIOLOGY CONGRESS

In February 2026, the GAC hosted a field trip as part of the International Deer Biology Congress, providing 19 (mostly international) participants with an opportunity to learn about game animal management and hunting in New Zealand.

The field trip showcased practical examples of game animal management, research and hunter involvement, with participants hearing directly from organisations involved in managing New Zealand's game animal herds and conservation challenges.

Participant feedback was extremely positive, particularly about the opportunity to see New Zealand game animal management in practice and engage directly with those involved in research, hunting and management.

The field trip strengthened international research relationships and provided opportunities for knowledge sharing that can support the GAC's research and game animal management work.

VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR PROFESSIONAL HUNTING GUIDES

The GAC has worked with the NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association (NZPHGA) to establish a framework for a Voluntary Certification Scheme for Professional Hunting Guides.

The proposed scheme is intended to support high standards of expertise, ethics, and responsible land and game animal stewardship within the guided hunting industry, while strengthening New Zealand's reputation as an international hunting destination.

In 2025-2026, the GAC engaged with a range of standard-setting and accreditation bodies, including the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Standards New Zealand, and the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ), to understand options for providing independent assurance and consistent application of the scheme.

The Council determined that pursuing international standards was the preferred pathway, subject to securing independent funding to develop the required standards and support from the NZPHGA, of which the GAC will continue working towards in 2026-2027.

STATEMENT OF SERVICE PERFORMANCE

New Zealand Game Animal Council
As at 30 June 2026

This section reports the GAC's performance against the outcomes, performance measures and targets as set out in the GAC's 2025-2026 SPE.

OUTCOME 1 – IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MANAGEMENT OF GAME ANIMALS

Measure of success: Support the Minister to improve game animal management through strengthened national policy direction, enhanced coordination across New Zealand, effective implementation of the GAC Act HOSI mechanism, and promotion of voluntary hunting standards that elevate New Zealand's profile as a premier international hunting destination.

Activity	Performance Measure	Target 2025/2026	Status
Advise and make recommendations to the Minister in relation to game animals and hunting.	The Minister is advised of issues and opportunities that are relevant to the hunting sector and the management of game animals in New Zealand.	Provide at least one piece of advice.	Achieved. The GAC provided advice to the Minister throughout 2025-2026 on a range of hunting and game animal management matters, including HOSI, tahr management, deer population pressures, recreational hunting areas and wild animal recovery operations. *(2024/2025 target - achieved)*
Liaise with DOC and hunting sector stakeholders to support the designation of HOSI.	Support the development of proposals and subsequent statutory process for establishing HOSI and establish workstreams to support the implementation of HOSI following any future designation.	Provide at least one piece of informative work to DOC within a HOSI statutory process.	Achieved. The GAC provided advice and information on herd management plans and delegations to DOC throughout the statutory processes for establishing the Sika and Wapiti HOSI. *(New measure 2025/2026)*
Liaise with DOC and stakeholders to implement Te Ara ki Mua and seek to improve the management of game animals.	Prepare a GAC 'Management of Game Animals in New Zealand Master Plan' that incorporates spatial planning for each herd/area and identifies: • Herd value. • Management options. • Conservation values and objectives. • Logistical considerations. • Hunter access.	Business case for GAC 'Management of Game Animals in New Zealand Master Plan' considered by Council by 30 June 2026.	Achieved. Council considered the business case for a national game animal management strategy and decided to put the work on hold pending further development of national direction for game animal management. *(2024/2025 target – achieved in part)*
Development of voluntary standards for hunting.	Establish a Voluntary Certification for Professional Hunting Guides.	Council determines if it is appropriate to pursue external accreditation of the Voluntary Certification framework for professional hunting guides, by 30 June 2026.	Achieved. Council considered the options for external accreditation of the Voluntary Certification framework for professional hunting guides and agreed that the GAC should pursue external accreditation. *(2024/2025 target – achieved)*

OUTCOME 2 – ENABLE ENHANCED COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR GAME ANIMAL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Measure of success: Support science-informed integration of hunter contributions and strengthen stakeholder engagement to enhance community support for game animal management, including recognition of subsidiary benefits that reinforce the social license for hunting.

Activity	Performance Measure	Target 2025/2026	Status
Conduct research on game animal hunting and hunters' contributions to conservation in New Zealand.	Assess hunter contributions to game animal management and communities and potential advancements.	Report on the Game Animal Hunting Research Survey Project.	Achieved. The GAC completed the research and analysis and reported to Council on the Game Animal Hunting Research Survey Project. The findings provide an evidence base to inform the GAC's advice and future game animal management work. *(2024/2025 target – achieved)*
Develop positive relationships between the GAC and stakeholders through effective liaison, advice, and communication.	Enhance relationships and the quality of engagement between the GAC and stakeholders, iwi and hapū.	Undertake first annual survey of key stakeholders to assess the quality of engagement with the GAC.	Achieved. The GAC completed its first annual stakeholder survey to assess the quality of its engagement. All respondents were satisfied with their overall engagement with the GAC, found communication and engagement easy, and considered the frequency of communication about right. *(2024/2025 target – achieved)*
Improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe and legitimate activity and game animals as valued introduced species.	Facilitate management systems that support improved game animal management and provide benefits to local communities or conservation.	Launch an online platform that supports community meat donations and food safety.	Achieved. The GAC launched the Hunt and Share online platform in collaboration with the Wild Game Recovery Trust/Game Changer NZ and The Salvation Army, who are utilising the platform. Hunt and Share supports wild game meat donation, providing a system for recording and tracing donated meat and supports hunters to contribute wild game meat to their communities. *(New measure 2025/2026)*

OUTCOME 3 – IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROVISION OF HUNTING SAFETY AND EDUCATION

Measure of success: Support improved hunter enjoyment, success and safety through provision of useful tools and quality education resources.

Activity	Performance Measure	Target 2025/2026	Status
Improve game animal management and conservation through education.	Increase the quality and usefulness of the Better Hunting education programme.	Conduct annual survey of users to identify opportunities for improving the quality and usefulness of Better Hunting.	Achieved. The GAC conducted its second Better Hunting user survey to all Better Hunting user accounts to identify opportunities to improve the quality and usefulness of the platform. Survey responses were used to inform future hunter education work and the ongoing development of Better Hunting. *(2024/2025 target – achieved)*
Improve game animal management and conservation through education.	Continued development and promotion of the Better Hunting education programme and resources.	Increase the number of new users by at least 500.	Achieved. Better Hunting gained 1,728 new user accounts during 2025-2026. The GAC continued to develop and promote Better Hunting resources throughout the year, supporting increased capability across the hunting sector, particularly for new and inexperienced hunters. *(2024/2025 target – achieved)*

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH AND CAPABILITY

The GAC has identified no service-critical assets in line with the reporting requirements in CO (23) 9.

GOVERNANCE - THE COUNCIL

The Council is governed by a Council appointed by the Minister for Hunting and Fishing.

The Council is responsible for setting the GAC's strategic direction and monitoring its organisational performance.

Council members do not represent specific organisations or interests, but bring a range of different perspectives, regional knowledge, skills and expertise to the Council.

Considerable focus was placed on strengthening governance, strategic direction, and organisational planning during 2025-2026. Council members participated in a series of governance and strategy workshops, beginning with a full-day workshop in Wellington, externally facilitated, with two further internally facilitated workshops. This work culminated in Council approving a new organisational strategy to replace the GAC's 2023 Strategic Plan.

In June 2026, the GAC conducted its annual Council Member Evaluation Survey for the fourth consecutive year. The survey helps identify strengths and weaknesses in Council processes and informs opportunities to strengthen governance practices.

COUNCIL MEMBERS



Matt Clarke - Chair
Matt was appointed to the Council in August 2025 for 3 years and appointed as Chair of the GAC from 1 July 2026.



Melissa Jackson (Uenuku, Ngāti Rāhiri Tumutumu, Ngāti Maniapoto) – Deputy Chair
Melissa was appointed in July 2023 for 2 years and was reappointed on 12 August 2025 for 3 years.



Eugene Rewi (Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Whare, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Ranginui)
Eugene was first appointed to the GAC in November 2021 for 3 years, then reappointed in September 2024 for 3 years. Eugene is Chair of the GAC's Finance and Te Kāhui Māori Subcommittee's and is the Māori and Tikanga Advisor for the Council.



Peter Swann (Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakaata East Coast, Tairāwhiti, Tūranganui a Kiwa)
Peter was appointed to the GAC in August 2022 for 3 years and reappointed in August 2025 for 3 years.



Glenn MacPherson
Glenn was appointed to the GAC in September 2024 for 3 years.

Incoming Council members

Jim Goodall, Emeritus Professor Bruce McKenzie and Paula Bennett start their term from 1 July 2026. They are all 3-year appointments.

During 2025-2026, Tui Keenan completed her term. Matt Clarke joined the Council, while Melissa Jackson and Peter Swann were reappointed for further three-year terms. In June 2026, Grant Dodson completed six years of service to the GAC as Chair, and John Cook and Andrew Simpson also completed their terms on the Council. Matt Clarke was appointed Chair from 1 July 2026. The GAC thanks its departing members for their commitment and service. In June 2026, Council member Callum Sheridan advised that he intended to stand as a candidate in the 2026 general election and temporarily stood down from the Council pending the election result.

SUBCOMMITTEES

The Council has several subcommittees to support its work:

- Finance Committee
- Te Kāhui Māori Subcommittee
- The Sika and Wapiti Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) subcommittees (which were not active at year-end)

MEETINGS

The GAC held four Council meetings, and three workshops in 2025-2026. The workshops supported the development of the GAC's new organisational strategy and consideration of key planning and accountability documents for 2026-2027.

STAFF

As at 30 June 2026, the GAC employed six permanent staff (5.7 FTE):

- Chief Executive Officer (1 FTE)
- Chief Operating Officer (1 FTE)
- Senior Policy and Projects Advisor (0.9 FTE) (appointed March 2026)
- Communications Advisor (1 FTE)
- Learning and Digital Assets Lead (0.8 FTE)
- Executive Administrator (1 FTE)

Specialist contractors also supported the GAC's delivery of scientific and technical advice. From September 2025, the Chief Executive was seconded on a shared CEO arrangement with Fish & Game New Zealand, while continuing as Chief Executive of the GAC.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The GAC is committed to being a good employer, as defined in section 118 of the Crown Entities Act 2004. While it does not have a formal Equal Employment Opportunities programme, it is committed to fairness, equity and equal opportunity in its employment practices.

Most staff work remotely with consideration given to individual needs and circumstances.

The GAC provides a flexible and supportive working environment that accommodates family, community, recreational and professional commitments. Staff are provided with appropriate tools and support, underpinned by human resource policies and processes. The Council is committed to addressing any bullying or harassment complaints promptly and appropriately.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY

The GAC continued to strengthen its administrative capability, organisational systems and governance arrangements during 2025-2026 to support the effective delivery of its statutory responsibilities. Internal policies, processes and governance guidance, were reviewed and updated during the year, including those relating to risk management and organisational accountability. The GAC also continued to respond to requests for official information in accordance with its statutory obligations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The GAC remains committed to supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff and Council members. Its Health and Safety Policy and associated procedures provide the framework for managing health and safety responsibilities.

During 2025-2026, the GAC introduced an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), providing staff with access to confidential support services, and adopted an EAP Services Policy.

Staff also continued to have access to wellbeing initiatives introduced in the previous year, including flexible annual leave and reimbursement for eligible eyecare costs.

Staff capability and development were supported through professional development training and staff workshops. For a largely remote workforce, the workshops also provided opportunities to work together in person, share knowledge and strengthen team relationships.

The GAC continues to review its health, safety and wellbeing arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate for its largely remote workforce.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The GAC is committed to providing a work environment that embraces and values inclusion and diversity. As at 30 June 2026, the Council comprises eight male Council members and one female Council member. Four operational staff are female, two are male.

MĀORI CROWN RELATIONS CAPABILITY AND TE AO MĀORI

The GAC recognises and respects te ao Māori, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, the relationship of Māori with whenua and natural resources, and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Kāhui Māori Subcommittee provides Māori perspectives and advice within the GAC's governance structure and played an important role throughout 2025-2026. Its advice supported the meaningful inclusion of te ao Māori in the GAC's strategic direction, Council processes, policies and engagement with mana whenua.

The Subcommittee also supported staff with the appropriate use of te reo and tikanga and helped to strengthen the GAC's capability to engage meaningfully with Māori communities. This work continues to build the GAC's organisational capability and inform its future direction.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Accountants: Shand Thomson, P O Box 2, Balclutha

Auditor: Zoe Yao, Owen McLeod and Co Limited - 91 Clarence Street, Hamilton 3204

Bankers: Kiwibank, Private Bag 39888, Wellington Mail Centre, Lower Hutt 5045

Main sources of cash and resources: Annual allocation from Department of Conservation

Main methods used to raise funds: Donations, grants and interest-bearing bank accounts

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

New Zealand Game Animal Council
For the period ended 30 June 2026

The Council is responsible for:

- The preparation of the Financial Statements and Statement of Service Performance and for the judgements made in them.
- Establishing and maintaining a system of internal control designed to provide reasonable assurance as to the integrity and reliability of financial reporting.
- Any end-of-year performance information provided by the New Zealand Game Animal Council under section 19A of the Public Finance Act 1989, whether or not that information is included in the Council's Annual Report.

In the opinion of the signatories, the Financial Statements and Statement of Service Performance for the year ended 30 June 2026 fairly reflect the financial position and operations of the New Zealand Game Animal Council.

Signed on behalf of the Council:



Matt Clarke
Chair
30 October 2026



Melissa Jackson
Deputy Chair
30 October 2026

ENTITY INFORMATION

New Zealand Game Animal Council
As at 30 June 2026

Legal Name: The Game Animal Council

Vision: Sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, communities, commerce and conservation.

Purpose: To achieve the sustainable management of game animals and hunting by fulfilling the functions of the Game Animal Council Act 2013.

Key Functions: The key functions of the Game Animal Council are to advise the Minister of Conservation (now the Minister for Hunting and Fishing) on matters relating to game animals and hunting, exercise its powers for Herds of Special Interest, provide information and education to the hunting sector, raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector and promote hunter safety initiatives.

Strategic Objectives:
The Game Animal Council has identified eight objectives to achieve this:

1. Provide well-considered advice and recommendations to the Minister of Conservation on matters relating to game animals and hunting.
2. Develop positive relationships between the Game Animal Council and stakeholders through effective liaison, advice, and communication.
3. Enhance the quality of game animal herds while maintaining or enhancing conservation outcomes.
4. Raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector.
5. Promote hunter safety and education.
6. Improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe and legitimate activity, and game animals as valued introduced species.
7. Promote standards for hunting and management of game animals.
8. Develop and uphold appropriate governance and management mechanisms.

Council Members during 2025-2026:
Grant Dodson – Chair; term concluded 30 June 2026, Melissa Jackson – Deputy Chair; reappointed August 2025, Eugene Rewi – reappointed 2024, John Cook – term concluded 30 June 2026, Tui Keenan – term concluded 12 August 2025, Peter Swann – reappointed August 2025, Callum Sheridan – temporarily stood down June 2026, Andrew Simpson – term concluded 30 June 2026, Glenn MacPherson – appointed 2024, Matt Clarke – appointed August 2025

Council Members changes from 1 July-2026:
Matt Clarke was appointed Chair
Paula Bennett, Bruce McKenzie and Jim Goodall were appointed to the Council.

Governance Arrangements: In accordance with the Game Animal Council Act 2013, Section 8(1), the Minister must appoint no fewer than 9, and no more than 11, persons as members of the Council.

Section 8(6) states that an appointment of a member of the Council must be made by notice in the Gazette; and takes effect from the date of the notice, or a later date specified in the notice.

Entity Structure: The Council does not have any separate operating units, divisions, or branches and does not have any subsidiaries or other controlled entities for financial reporting purposes.

Entity Type: Independent statutory body established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013

Physical Address: N/A

Postal Address: P O Box 222 Te Puke 3153

Contact details:
Chair, Matt Clarke – matt.clarke@nzgac.org.nz
CEO, Corina Jordan – corina.jordan@nzgac.org.nz

Accountants:
Shand Thomson, P O Box 2, Balclutha

Auditor: Zoe Yao, Owen McLeod and Co Limited 91 Clarence Street, Hamilton 3204

Bankers: Kiwibank, Private Bag 39888, Wellington Mail Centre, Lower Hutt 5045

Main Sources of Cash and Resources:
Department of Conservation appropriations through Vote Conservation

Main Methods Used to Raise Funds:
Service delivery | grants | contracts

FUNDING, OUTPUT CLASSES AND ESTIMATED OUTPUT CLASS EXPENSES

New Zealand Game Animal Council
As at 30 June 2026

The Game Animal Council is primarily funded through Department of Conservation allocation.

TOTAL REVENUE AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE

	2025-2026 Actual $	2025-2026 Budget $	2024-2025 Actual $
Total revenue	1,317,690	1,200,200	1,005,376
Total expenditure	1,307,906	1,218,822	941,338
Total surplus (deficit)	9,784	(18,622)	64,038

OUTPUT CLASSES

For the 2025-26 year the Game Animal Council had three reportable output classes:

1. Provide advice to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on matters relating to game animals and hunting.
2. Enable community engagement and collaboration for improved game animal management and to promote safe and responsible hunting practices.
3. Facilitate management systems to support enhanced hunting, community and conservation outcomes.

The figures presented in the Statement of Financial Performance represent the cost-of-service.

Financials	2025-2026 Allocation Actual $	2025-2026 Allocation Budget $	2024-2025 Allocation Actual $
Output 1 Provide advice to the Minister for Hunting and Fishing on matters relating to game animals and hunting.			
Revenue allocation	432,773	400,200	502,500
Expenditure allocation	503,328	459,857	421,205
Surplus (deficit)	**(70,555)**	**(59,657)**	**81,295**
Output 2 Enable community engagement and collaboration for improved game animal management and to promote safe and responsible hunting practices.			
Revenue allocation	452,417	400,000	502,876
Expenditure allocation	407,203	409,724	520,133
Surplus (deficit)	**45,214**	**(9,724)**	**(17,257)**
Output 3 Facilitate management systems to support enhanced hunting, community and conservation outcomes.			
Revenue allocation	432,500	400,000	-
Expenditure allocation	397,375	349,241	-
Surplus (deficit)	**35,125**	**50,759**	**Nil**
Total: Revenue	**1,317,690**	**1,200,200**	**1,005,376**
Total Expenditure	**1,307,906**	**1,218,822**	**941,338**
Total surplus (deficit)	**9,784**	**(18,622)**	**64,038**

AUDITED BY OWEN MCLEOD & CO

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

New Zealand Game Animal Council
For the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	FY26 Actual	FY26 Budget	FY25 Actual
		$	$	$
Revenue				
General Funding Received from Central or Local Government		1,200,000	1,200,000	1,000,000
Revenue from Service Delivery Grants|Contracts (non-government)	1	117,417	-	5,000
Interest, Dividends and Other Investment Revenue		273	200	376
Total Revenue		1,317,690	1,200,200	1,005,376
Expenses				
Employee Remuneration and Other Related Party Expenses	2	815,155	832,522	623,133
Other Expenses Related to Service Delivery	2	437,354	332,500	269,714
Other expenses	2	55,397	53,800	48,491
Total expenses		1,307,906	1,218,822	941,338
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year		9,784	(18,622)	64,038

AUDITED BY OWEN MCLEOD & CO

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

New Zealand Game Animal Council
As at 30 June 2026

	Note	FY26 Actual	FY26 Budget	FY25 Actual
		$	$	$
Assets				
Current Assets				
Bank and short-term deposits		240,765	127,369	179,278
Debtors and prepayments		76,645	-	18,195
Total Assets		**317,410**	**127,369**	**197,473**
Less Liabilities				
Current Liabilities				
Creditors and accrued expenses		43,080	66,993	23,005
Employee costs payable		104,875	-	64,798
Deferred Revenue		50,000	-	-
Total Liabilities		**197,955**	**66,993**	**87,803**
Net Assets		119,455	60,376	109,671
Accumulated Funds				
Opening Balance		109,671	78,998	45,633
Accumulated surpluses or (deficits)		9,784	(18,622)	64,038
Closing Balance		119,455	60,376	109,671

AUDITED BY OWEN MCLEOD & CO

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

New Zealand Game Animal Council
For the year ended 30 June 2026

	Note	FY26 Actual	FY26 Budget	FY25 Actual
		$	$	$
Cash Flows from Operating Activities				
Cash was received from:				
Government Services Delivery Grants|Other Funding		1,200,000	1,200,000	1,000,000
Non-government Service Delivery Grants|Contracts		117,375	-	5,000
Interest, Dividends & Other Investment Receipts		273	200	376
Total		1,317,648	1,200,200	1,005,376
Cash was applied to:				
Employee Remuneration & Related Payments		763,702	832,522	615,375
Payments Related to Service Delivery		437,757	301,664	335,069
Other Expenses		54,702	56,800	48,491
Total		1,256,161	1,190,986	998,935
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities		61,487	9,214	6,441
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash		61,487	9,214	6,441
Opening Cash		179,278	118,155	172,837
Closing Cash		240,765	127,369	179,278
Represented By:				
Kiwibank Business Edge		221,187	113,838	165,947
Kiwibank Online Call Fund		19,578	13,531	13,331
Total Cash at Bank		240,765	127,369	179,278

AUDITED BY OWEN MCLEOD & CO

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

New Zealand Game Animal Council
For the year ended 30 June 2026

REPORTING ENTITY

New Zealand Game Animal Council is a statutory body established on 28 November 2013 under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 and is required to comply with parts of the Crown Entities Act 2004 and the Public Finance Act 1989.

BASIS OF PREPARATION

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Crown Entities Act 2004, which include the requirement to comply with generally accepted accounting practice in New Zealand (NZ GAAP). New Zealand Game Animal Council has elected to apply XRB Tier 3 Public Sector Entities Reporting Requirements on the basis that it does not have public accountability and has total annual expenses less than $5,000,000. All transactions in the performance report are reported using the accrual basis and historical costs basis of accounting.

The performance report is prepared under the assumption that the entity will continue to operate in the foreseeable future.

The financials and other statements are presented in New Zealand dollars.

PARTICULAR ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The following particular accounting policies adopted in the financial statements have a material effect on the results and financial position.

Revenue

- **Grants**
  General funding or grants with no documented expectations over use
  General funding received from central or local government, grants from non-government organisations and capital grants are recognised as revenue when the funds are received if there are no documented expectations over use.

  General funding or grants with documented expectations over use
  If funding is subject to documented expectations over use, the funds are initially recorded as deferred revenue. As the documented expectations over use are met, the deferred revenue is reduced and revenue is recorded.

  Interest and dividend revenue
  Interest revenue is recorded as it is earned during the year. Dividend revenue is recognised when the dividend is declared.

- **Goods & Services Tax (GST)**
  The Council is registered for GST. All amounts in the financial statements have been prepared on a "GST exclusive" basis with the exception of accounts receivable and accounts payable which are disclosed inclusive of GST.

- **Bank Accounts and Cash**
  Cash balances in the Statement of Cash Flows comprise of current accounts.

- **Accounts Receivable**
  Accounts receivable are initially recorded at the amount owed. When it is likely the amount owed (or some portion) will not be collected, a provision for impairment is recognised and the loss is recorded as a bad debt expense.

- **Taxation**
  New Zealand Game Animal Council is established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 and therefore is exempt from income tax. On 02 April 2024, the Inland Revenue Department confirmed that the Council is exempt from income tax as per section CW38 of the Income Tax Act 2007 (ITA), which exempts certain income derived by a public authority. In addition, it confirmed that the Council is an instrument of the Executive Government of New Zealand". This means the Council is a "public authority" and it is therefore exempt from income tax under s CW 38 of the ITA.

- **Property, Plant & Equipment**
  All property, plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Assets purchased with a cost price exceeding $5,000 will be capitalised.

- **Statutory Reporting Deadline**
  Section 156 of the Crown Entities Act requires the Council to submit its financial statements for audit within 3 months of its balance date and to provide an audit report within 4 months of the end of the financial year.

- **Depreciation**
  Depreciation has been provided for on a Diminishing Value basis which writes off the assets over their expected useful lives.

- **Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses**
  Accounts payable and accrued expenses are measured at the amount owed.

- **Advertising, marketing, administration, overhead, and fundraising costs**
  These are expensed when the related service has been received.

- **Employee costs payable**
  A liability for employee costs payable is recorded when an employee has earned the entitlement. These include salaries and wages accrued up to balance date and annual leave earned but not yet taken at balance date.

CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING POLICIES

There have been no material changes in accounting policies from those applied last year.

NOTES TO THE PERFORMANCE REPORT

New Zealand Game Animal Council
For the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 1 – Revenue

	FY26 Actual $	FY26 Budget $	FY25 Actual $
Revenue from service delivery grantscontracts (non-government)			
NZ Fish and Game Council	97,500	-	-
Field Trip Registrations	19,917	-	-
NZPHGA Grant	-	-	5,000
Total Revenue from Service Delivery Grants/Contracts (non-government)	**117,417**	**Nil**	**5,000**

Note 2 – Expenses

Classification	FY26 Actual $	FY26 Budget $	FY25 Actual $
Employee remunerations & other related expenses			
Staff Salaries	797,588	810,022	590,577
Recruitment Costs	2,246	10,000	29,306
Other Employee Costs	14,106	11,500	2,406
ACC Levies	1,215	1,000	845
Total Employee Remuneration & Other Related Expenses	**815,155**	**832,522**	**623,133**

	FY26 Actual $	FY26 Budget $	FY25 Actual $
Other expenses related to service delivery – Contracted Services			
Communications	48,508	5,500	7,000
Technical Advice – HOSI	25,128	45,000	8,186
Technical Advice – GAM & Firearms	37,108	20,000	17,580
Funding, Strategy & Accountability	11,587	3,000	5,030
Digital Marketing	3,880	5,500	4,400
Research	21,154	20,000	23,890
Statutory	45,468	-	2,420
Landowner Advice	16,000	-	-
	208,833	**99,000**	**68,506**

Council Meetings and Per Diems			
Accommodation	8,406	14,000	11,773
Travel	24,923	27,000	28,364
Catering | Meals	6,875	6,000	5,336
Per Diems & Allowances	23,008	20,000	12,493
Rental Cars & Parking	940	1,600	1,019
Venue	2,494	2,000	1,690
Governance Training	-	1,500	-
	66,646	**72,100**	**60,675**

Operating Expenses – Advertising & Promotions			
General	24,634	44,000	33,237
Herds of Special Interest	140	-	-
Stakeholders Engagement	593	-	-
SIKA Show	5,699	-	4,956
Parliamentary Hunt	26	-	-
DBC|GAC Field Trip	696	-	-
	31,788	**44,000**	**38,193**

Operating Expenses – Travel & Mileage			
General	14,039	42,900	16,873
Herds of Special Interest	6,977	-	8,519
Stakeholders Engagement	11,787	-	6,762
SIKA Show	5,675	-	5,577
Parliamentary Hunt	10,290	10,000	11,674
IDBC|GAC Field Trip	13,242	5,000	13
	62,010	**57,900**	**49,418**

Operating Expenses – Food & Accommodation			
General	700	15,000	2,857
Herds of Special Interest	305	-	1,720
Stakeholders Engagement	4,266	-	10,317
SIKA Show	5,607	-	6,160
Parliamentary Hunt	1,559	-	3,220
IDBC|GAC Field Trip	12,519	5,000	232
	24,956	**20,000**	**24,506**

Operating Expenses – Other			
General Expenses	7,932	3,000	11,514
Hunting Safety & Education	7,143	10,000	7,120
Board Management Software	361	1,500	1,400
Legal Fees	13,187	15,000	-
Per Diems & Allowances	14,498	10,000	8,383
	43,121	**39,500**	**28,417**

Total Other Expenses Related to Service Delivery	**437,354**	**332,500**	**269,714**

	FY26 Actual $	FY26 Budget $	FY25 Actual $
Other Expenses			
Accountancy	8,987	8,000	7,495
Annual Reports	1,440	1,300	1,200
Audit Fees	6,895	7,000	6,655
Bank Fees	443	600	270
General Expenses	3,249	2,000	3,834
Insurance	3,665	3,000	2,975
IT Costs	13,435	8,000	9,037
Repairs & Maintenance	-	200	110
Small Asset Purchases	1,825	6,400	3,266
Stationery, Photocopier & Postage	3,862	3,800	2,883
Subscriptions	422	1,000	-
Telecommunication	10,502	10,000	10,241
Website	672	2,500	525
Total Other Expenses	**$55,397**	**$53,800**	**$48,491**

Note 3 - Leased Assets
There are no assets subject to operating or financial leases (FY25:Nil).

Note 4 - Contingent Liabilities
There were no contingent liabilities at balance date (FY25:Nil).

Note 5 - Capital Commitments
There were no capital commitments at balance date (FY25:Nil).

Note 6 - Related Party Transactions
There are no transactions involving related parties during the financial year. (FY25: Nil)

Note 7 - Grants and funding subject to conditions
GAC has received $50,000 from Land Safety Forum for funding to make a hunting safety video in 2026-27. This has been recorded as deferred revenue as the project has not been completed.

Note 8 - Events Subsequent to Balance Date
There have been no material events since balance date, which would materially affect the financial statements as at 30 June 2026.

Non-financial disclosures
Nil.

Future revenue - 2026-2027 year (and beyond)
Baseline Crown funding of $1,200,000 has been confirmed for 2026-27 with a further $860,000 allocated to contribute to the Council's management of the designated Sika HOSI in the Central North Island. Securing sustainable funding has been one of the Council's primary focuses for many years and increased funding enables the Council to deliver upon its legislated functions.

Note 9 - Changes in Accumulated Funds
The accumulated reserves consist of accumulated net surplus|deficits.

Note 10 - Council members' remuneration

Council member	2025-26 Actual $	2024-25 Actual $
Matt Clarke (Chair from 1 July 2026)	1,885	-
Grant Dodson (Former Chair)	17,715	8,685
Melissa Jackson (Deputy Chair)	2,308	2,187
Sharon Salmons	150	430
Steve McFall	113	323
John Cook	1,535	1,220
Eugene Rewi	4,450	2,800
Tui Keenan	660	1,005
Kevin Eastwood	225	645
Peter Swann	150	430
Callum Sheridan	3,242	1,543
Andrew Simpson	2,045	1,290
Glenn MacPherson	3,027	1,757
Total Council member remuneration	37,505	22,315

Note 11 - Employee remuneration

The council has grown in the 2025-26 year to employ 4 permanent and 2 part-time employees. The employees remuneration has been disclosed in band widths.

Band width $000	FY26	FY25
200-210	1	0
150-160	1	0
130-140	0	1
120-130	3	1
100-110	0	2
0-100	1	2

The Audit Office
Te Mana Arotake

Independent Auditor's Report

To the readers of Game Animal Council financial statements and performance information for the year ended 30 June 2026

The Auditor-General is the auditor of Game Animal Council (the Council). The Auditor-General has appointed me, Liyan Yao, using the staff and resources of Owen McLeod & Co Limited, to carry out the audit of the financial statements and performance information on his behalf.

Opinion on the financial statements and the performance information

We have audited:

- the financial statements of the Game Animal Council that comprise the entity information, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026, the statement of financial performance, and statement of cash flows for the year ended on that date and the notes to the financial statements that include accounting policies and other explanatory information on pages 27 to 34; and
- the performance information that consists of the statement of performance of the Game Animal Council on pages 16 to 18 and page 26,

In our opinion:

- The financial statements of the Game Animal Council present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as at 30 June 2026, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with Reporting Requirements for Tier 3 Public Sector Entities.
- The performance information of the Game Animal Council is appropriate and meaningful and prepared in accordance with the Game Animal Council's measurement bases or evaluation methods and Reporting Requirements for Tier 3 Public Sector Entities, and presents fairly, in all material respects, the Game Animal Council's service performance and actual revenue and expenses for each reportable class of outputs for the year ended 30 June 2026 compared to the forecast standards and budgets included in statement of performance expectations for the year.

Basis for our opinion

We carried out our audit in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Professional and Ethical Standards and the International Standards on Auditing (New Zealand) issued by the New Zealand Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Responsibilities of the auditor for the audit of the financial statements and the statement of performance* section of our report.

We have fulfilled our responsibilities in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of the Council for the financial statements and the performance information

The Council is responsible on behalf of the Game Animal Council for preparing financial statements and performance information that are fairly presented and comply with Reporting Requirements for Tier 3 Public Sector Entities. This includes:

- the selection of elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions, and measurement bases or evaluation methods to enable the presentation of service performance information that is appropriate and meaningful; and

- the preparation of a statement of performance, in accordance with the Game Animal Council's measurement bases or evaluation methods, that provides an appropriate and meaningful basis to enable readers to assess what has been achieved for the year.

The Council is responsible for such internal control as it determines is necessary to enable it to prepare financial statements and a statement of performance that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements and performance information, the Council is responsible on behalf of the Game Animal Council for assessing the Game Animal Council's ability to continue as a going concern. The Council is also responsible for disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting, unless there is an intention to merge or to terminate the activities of the Game Animal Council, or there is no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Council's responsibilities arise from the Public Finance Act 1989, the Crown Entities Act 2004, and the Conservation Act 1987.

Responsibilities of the auditor for the audit of the financial statements and the performance information

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements and performance information, as a whole, are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit carried out in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements are differences or omissions of amounts or disclosures, and can arise from fraud or error. Misstatements are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of readers, taken on the basis of these financial statements and performance information.

For the budget information reported in the financial statements and performance information, our procedures were limited to checking that the information agreed to the Game Animal Council's statement of performance expectations.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. Also:

- We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements and the statement of performance, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- We obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Game Animal Council's internal control.

- We evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Council.

- We obtain an understanding of the process applied by the Game Animal Council to select its elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions and the measurement bases or evaluation methods.

- We evaluate whether:

    - the selection of elements/aspects of service performance, performance measures and/or descriptions and measurement bases or evaluation methods present an appropriate and meaningful assessment of the Game Animal Council's service performance; and

    - the performance information is prepared in accordance with the Game Animal Council's measurement bases or evaluation methods, and presents fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with Reporting Requirements for Tier 3 Public Sector Entities for each class of reportable outputs;

        - the actual performance of the Game Animal Council as compared with the forecast standards of performance established for the financial year; and

    - the actual revenue earned and output expenses incurred as compared to the expected revenues and the proposed output expenses included in the Game Animal Council's statement of performance expectations for the financial year.

- We conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting by the Council and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Game Animal Council's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements and performance information or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Game Animal Council to cease to continue as a going concern.

- We evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements and performance information, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements and performance information represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Council regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Our responsibilities arise from the Public Audit Act 2001.

Other Information

The Council is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included up to page 15 and pages 19 to 25 in the annual report, but does not include the financial statements and performance information consisting of the statement of performance and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements and performance information does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of audit opinion or assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements and performance information, our responsibility is to read the other information. In doing so, we consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements and performance information or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on our work, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Independence

We are independent of the Animal Council in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards, which incorporate the independence requirements of Professional and Ethical Standard

1: *International Code of Ethics for Assurance Practitioners (including International Independence Standards) (New Zealand)* issued by the New Zealand Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

Other than in our capacity as auditor, we have no relationship with, or interests in, the Game Animal Council.



Liyan Yao
Owen McLeod & Co Ltd
On behalf of the Auditor-General
Hamilton, New Zealand
30 October 2026