

# New director for predator-free Waiheke

Mary Frankham has been appointed as the new project director for Te Korowai o Waiheke: Towards Predator Free Waiheke. Board Chair Grant Leach said Mary's knowledge of the island and strong credentials made her a tough candidate to beat.

"Not only does Mary have the skills and experience to lead the Te Korowai o Waiheke project, but she is also passionate about restoring native ecologies and, crucially, has a long history with Waiheke Island."

From February, Ms Frankham will lead and set overall delivery, strategy and direction for a bold, multi-year programme to eradicate predators on Waiheke.

The local board is supportive of the decision and is looking forward to developing a close working relationship with her.

"The board congratulates Mary Frankham on her appointment and Te Korowai o Waiheke for their selection process," says board chair Cath Handley.

"Mary is well credentialed for the role and we look forward to meeting with her as soon as she takes up her position, as we will need to have a close working re-

lationship over the next few years as the programme for pest eradication ramps up. "Coordination of all of the efforts across

nature. Success here will give us the confidence that we can do that nationally." Te Korowai o Waiheke secured a



Mary Frankham, the new project director of Te Korowai o Waiheke. Photo Peter Rees

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the island will be a challenge but we are of a size and a willingness at a community level to achieve the goal of being predator-free."

Ms Frankham was a key instigator of the Te Korowai o Waiheke project and spoke at the launch at Pirihahi Marae in September last year. At the launch, Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage said Waiheke's goal of being predator-free is enormously ambitious.

"If it's achieved it will be the largest populated island in the world to be predator-free. With 9000 people here on Waiheke, it's a world first that you're aiming for."

"Waiheke is a real opportunity to make a major step towards the predator free by 2050 goal for Aotearoa because you've got diverse landscapes, communities and

\$10.9 million budget to cover the five to seven-year programme on Waiheke. The pest-free initiative begins with the eradication of stoats this year, and rats across 25 percent of the island during 2020 to support environmental regeneration. After that, the aim is to expand the programme island-wide.

Ms Frankham says her close ties with the Waiheke community and understanding of the relationship locals have with the natural environment will be essential in her new role.

"We, the Waiheke community, love our environment - it's intrinsic to who we are, it's our history and taonga, and it's why many of us choose to be here. This love for our environment is something that unites us and I can't wait to get started on achieving this community-driven vision for the island." • Sophie Boladeras

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