

**JOBS | MAHI**  
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# Mana in Kaimahi Project Profile



Purpose of this review:

**To highlight the positive social,  
environmental, and community benefits  
resulting from the Mana in Kaimahi project.**





## Mana in Kaimahi

The Mana in Kaimahi project is creating employment opportunities for people to work in plant nurseries located in the Tamaki region. They are specifically targeting Māori youth to support at risk rangatahi. These nurseries provide support for environmental outputs such as growing plants, planting trees, controlling weeds and pests, and carrying out other conservation activities.

While the Department of Conservation (DOC) has contributed \$2.5 million to the Mana in Kaimahi project, it's important to note that this is part of a larger pool of funding. It's the collective funding that is driving the project's success and delivery of project benefits.

### Project goals

- Create new jobs for 18 people in the environmental training hubs in South Auckland
- Create more job opportunities in the new Waipuna Whangaitanga (Panmure Rohe)
- Provide training for staff to take on leadership roles in Te Whangai and mentor future employees.

Region	Auckland
Start date	13/04/2021
End date	30/06/2024
Approved DOC funding	\$2.5m
Intent	Capability Development, Ecosystem Restoration, Freshwater Restoration, Pest Control Animals, Pest Control Plants
Partners	Auckland Transport, Fonterra, NZ Steel, Watercare, Kiwirail, Healthy Waters, Downer, Fulton Hogan, Auckland Council local boards <sup>1</sup>
Funder	DOC



## Why is the project important for the region?

The nationwide COVID-19 lock-downs in 2020 were anticipated to have a significant impact on the Auckland region. This project was established to raise 480,000 native plants in nurseries across South Auckland to provide work for communities disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Te Whangai Trust Hub, has been assisting the long-term unemployed, youth, and people at risk of long term unemployment for the last decade, and have played a role in reducing the number of Māori job-seekers during this period. The funding is a significant boost for the hub to provide immediate employment opportunities to rangatahi and Māori to help reduce the economic impacts of COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>

## What difference is the project making to people?

The project is making a significant difference in the lives of the people involved. As of June 30, the following had been delivered:

- A total of \$1,557,842 funding has been paid on wages for employees
- Over 70,855 hours have been worked
- At least 61 people have been employed.<sup>3</sup>

The project is expected to create up to 72 full-time equivalent jobs in various positions, such as project manager, hub manager, environmental service workers, planting and pest eradication workers, plant propagation team members, truck drivers and kaitiaki. By early 2024 the project aims to have:

- 12 full-time employees receiving training in their chosen field
- 24 FTE kaimahi roles have completed
- the training applicable to their roles and interests by the end of the project.<sup>4</sup>

**“It’s the perfect way to combine the healing aspects of working in nature for our kids and our people who are coming out of prison. We give them wraparound care, get them budgeting, we build up their life skills, so they learn how to earn. And every Friday they come here and all do NZQA qualifications.”<sup>6</sup>**

Radio New Zealand

This helps the individuals develop valuable skills that can improve their career prospects and contribute to the social wellbeing of the local community.

This project has provided a supportive and inclusive environment, promoting personal growth, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose for people. Many employees have already reported improvements in their mental health and well-being, increased confidence, a greater sense of belonging, and community connection.

The project also focuses on holistic well-being, providing support and resources to address other barriers to employment, such as housing, health, and addiction issues, which helps to improve the economic and social well-being for the individuals concerned. This helps to empower marginalised individuals to break inter-generational cycles of welfare dependence and enter the workforce.<sup>5</sup>

Examples of the roles created through the project are<sup>8</sup>:

- Nursery worker
- Inventory specialist responsible for managing stock and online data.

These roles offer various qualifications and opportunities, including:

- Level 2 horticulture certification
- Spraying qualifications
- Driver’s license
- Health and safety training
- Apprenticeship with Primary ITO.

Before joining these roles, some individuals had been through the justice system or removed from a previous training course and were unsure about their career path and future outlook. The Trust helped these individuals to get back on their feet by accepting them for who they are and providing a safe and supportive environment that promotes their well-being. This allows employees to feel like they can achieve something and get their lives back on track.

### **How is the project contributing to the wellbeing of Māori?**

The Trust collaborates with local iwi/Māori entities, incorporating cultural values and practices into the mahi. Strengthening the connection between the employees and the local Māori community fosters cultural awareness, understanding, and respect.

The project also provides opportunities for participants to learn about traditional Māori practices and Mātauranga (traditional Māori knowledge) related to the land, environment, and sustainability.

Māori employees can connect with their cultural heritage and engage in activities that align with Māori perspectives on land, water,

**“The idea of Jobs for Nature is really great because we’re doing something good for the environment, and at the same time, we’re providing employment for people who might be struggling to find work.”<sup>7</sup>**

Tom McGuire, team leader for Mana in Kaimahi



and natural resources, supporting cultural values. This contributes to improving overall well-being, contributing personal growth, self-esteem, and enhancing Māori aspirations for the environment.<sup>9</sup>

Positive impacts to youth/rangatahi. This project is focused on creating employment opportunities and career pathways for at-risk rangatahi, while also promoting reconnection with their whenua.

The NEET rate in Auckland, which represents the number of people not in education, employment, or training, was 11.3% of the population in 2019-20, with Māori and Pasifika populations experiencing even higher rates of 18.8% and 15.7% respectively.

This project is building on the targeted support already provided by the Trust for youth, Māori, and Pasifika communities, using an iwi-centric approach. They promote cultural connection and well-being to create meaningful employment opportunities. By directly employing and training rangatīhi Māori and Pasifika the project is contributing towards reducing the NEET rate in Auckland

and helping to break the cycle of welfare dependency and youth justice involvement that disproportionately impacts Māori and Pasifika communities.<sup>10</sup>

## What are the environmental impacts of the project?

The project focuses on environmental restoration and conservation, through planting native trees and eradicating pests. These activities improve the local ecosystem, improve biodiversity, and provide habitats for native flora and fauna.

As at June 30 2023 the following environmental outputs have been delivered<sup>11</sup>:

- 284,660 plants produced for restoration this contributes to the reestablishment of native vegetation, improving biodiversity and habitat for the local wildlife
- 159,929 trees, plants or stems have been planted, the trees help in carbon

sequestration, reducing greenhouse gas emissions

- 332,615 nursery plants weeded for restoration across 36 hectares. This ensures the healthy growth of native plants supporting the local ecosystem
- 5.5 hectares treated for rats or mustelids helping to protect our native species from predators supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health
- 156,287 plants planted in riparian or wetland areas contributing to the improvement of water quality and habitat creation
- 1,4 hectares of historic heritage assets maintained, preserving cultural and historical resources for future generations.

**“It’s really satisfying to see how far the project has come in such a short time, and to know that we’re making a real difference to the environment.” - Tania Thompson, a participant in the Mana in Kaimahi project.”<sup>12</sup>**

Radio New Zealand,  
19 April 2021

## Economic benefits

By providing employment and training, this project reduces dependence on social welfare and contributes to reducing recidivism rates for at-risk youth.

The Trust’s employment pathways have helped 30% of previous participants transition out of the justice system, resulting in an average savings of \$120,000 per year per person to the taxpayer and government. Additionally, the remaining 70% of their participants at the time came off long-term benefit support.

This project has the potential to create a social return on investment for the Auckland community through improved incomes, new skills and qualifications for employees, and improving their overall quality of life.<sup>13</sup>

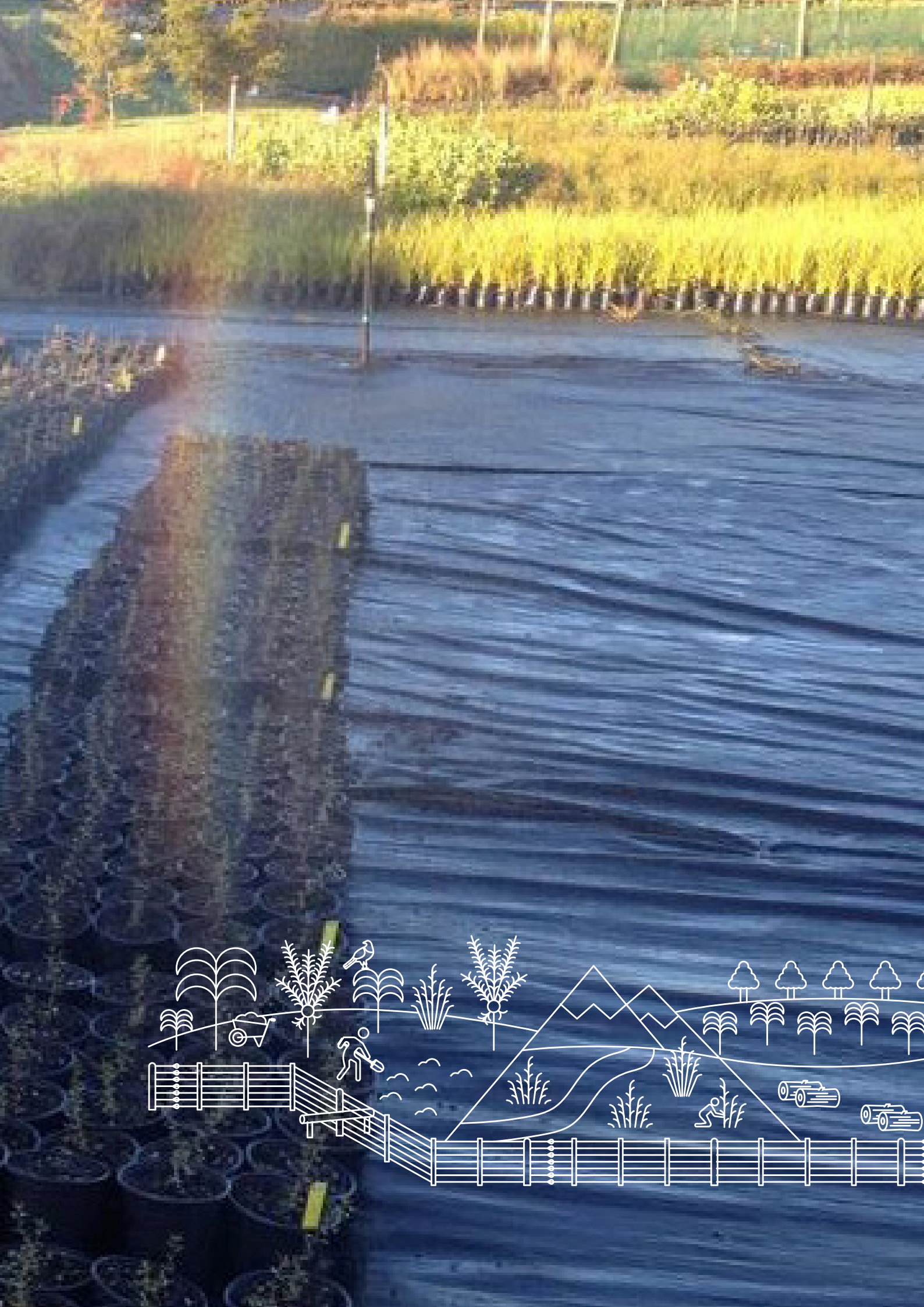


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