

Crown purchase of Ōrākau property Q&A

1. Where is the property?

The property is about five kilometres south east of Kihikihi on Arapuni Road. It is approximately 9.7 hectares (being Lot 1 DPS 19526 (CFR SA18B/416) and Lot 1 DPS 25608 (CFR SA24D/96)).

2. When did the land transfer to the Crown?

18 May 2015.

3. How is the property currently used?

The property is currently a working farm.

4. What are the implications of the site being a wāhi tapu area?

The site is recorded as a wāhi tapu area in the records of Heritage New Zealand. This means concerned iwi and hapū have identified the site to be of spiritual and cultural importance.

Significantly, the area contains the remains of fallen Māori who were killed during battle and buried where they lay. The exact locations of the remains have not yet been identified. Given that the site is recorded as a wāhi tapu area, only certain uses of the property will be appropriate in the future.

5. Will it continue to be used as a farm?

The Crown will consult with interested parties regarding the future management of the property. The Crown and iwi agree that it isn't appropriate to have stock graze on a wāhi tapu site.

6. What are the Crown's long-term plans for the site?

The Crown will maintain the site while interested parties are consulted about the future of the property.

7. Why is the Battle of Ōrākau so significant?

Contemporary and current historians consider the Battle of Ōrākau to be the decisive battle of the New Zealand Wars. The Māori combatants comprised many different groups who were united in their efforts to defend the remaining property of the Kingitanga from the Crown. Māori casualties were high. It has been estimated that, of the 300 Māori involved in the battle, as many as half lost their lives. Others escaped the pa at Ōrākau.

8. What iwi were involved in the Battle of Ōrākau?

The property is in the rohe of Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui and Ngāti Raukawa. A significant number of those iwi were involved, alongside a significant number of Ngāi Tūhoe and Ngāti Whare. Also involved were a number of Ngāti Kahungunu from upper Wairoa; members of Ngāti Te Kohera and Ngāti Tūwharetoa; and possibly individuals and small groups from other iwi and hapū.

9. Which Treaty settlement/s will it be used for?

It has not yet been decided how the land will be used. The Crown will engage with iwi, the Heritage Society, and the Waipa Council about the future possibilities for this very significant site.

10. Would the Crown consider making the land a reserve, as the Heritage Society has suggested?

Given the importance of the site to iwi and to New Zealand's history, the Crown believes the best approach is to hold and maintain the property while possibilities for its future use are discussed and considered.

11. Is it usual for the Crown to purchase private property for use in Treaty of Waitangi settlements?

It is not Crown policy to purchase private land for use in Treaty settlements. In this case, the owners approached the Crown with an offer to sell the property. Given the importance of the site, the Crown was pleased to have the opportunity to purchase the property and explore future possibilities for its use.

12. Does this set a precedent for the purchase of private land for use in Treaty of Waitangi settlements?

No, this purchase doesn't indicate any change in Crown policy about the purchase of private land for use in Treaty settlements.

13. Have similar purchases occurred in the past?

In 2008, outside the Treaty settlement process, the Crown purchased a small block of land near Dargaville (Bob's block) and gifted it to Te Roroa. The land was a significant wāhi tapu site for Te Roroa (burial caves) and was a key grievance acknowledged in the Waitangi Tribunal Report.

There have also been other occasions where the Crown has purchased private land after being approached by owners offering to sell sites of particular cultural significance.