

Party Summaries

Parties are presented in the same order throughout these summaries: first the coalition government elected in 2023 (National, ACT and New Zealand First), then the opposition (Labour, the Greens and Te Pāti Māori), and finally Opportunity, which holds no seats in the 2023–2026 Parliament but meets the polling criterion set out in Scope and Methods. This order is for consistency only and implies no ranking, preference or endorsement. Later sections list the parties in [alphabetical order](#), as explained there.

National Party

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Hon. Paul Goldsmith

National describes its foundational values as “ambition and success”, with “lower taxes” and “equal opportunity for all” at its core – also presenting itself as “doing the hard work required to deliver real solutions”, guided by values that include personal responsibility and limited government.⁸⁰ As the largest party in the coalition government, National has had the greatest influence over heritage policy and legislation in recent years, and has passed several pieces of legislation affecting heritage across its history. The party in New Zealand politics most known for its strong focus on the economy, National’s recent heritage efforts include reviewing heritage protections and ensuring that current heritage provisions do not have a negative impact on “economic growth, development capacity, or employment”.⁸¹

Where National Supports Heritage

National has supported heritage through legislation, funding for earthquake strengthening and, more recently, investment in heritage tourism and a creative and cultural strategy. In July 2025, Conservation Minister Tama Potaka announced \$4.5 million over three years from the International Visitor Levy to expand Tohu Whenua to Manawatū-Whanganui and Murihiku Southland. The programme, a partnership between HNZPT and DOC, began in 2016 and now covers 39 sites. Potaka said tourism to the 15,000 heritage places DOC is responsible for was estimated to be worth around \$1.3 billion a year.⁸²

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

The Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) Act replaced the Historic Places Act 1993. It was passed in 2014 by a National-led government, under then-Minister for Arts, Culture and

⁸⁰ National Party, “Our Values,” 2026, <https://www.national.org.nz/values>.

⁸¹ Chris Bishop, “Consultation Opens on Wellington Heritage Provisions,” Press release, August 3, 2026, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/consultation-opens-wellington-heritage-provisions>.

⁸² Tama Potaka, “Heritage Tourism Boost to Support Local Economies,” Press release, July 31, 2025, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/heritage-tourism-boost-support-local-economies>.

Heritage Chris Finlayson. The Act renamed the Historic Places Trust, retained the Māori Heritage Council, and provided for a National Historic Landmarks list and an emergency archaeological authority for use after natural disasters such as earthquakes.⁸³ Finlayson said it “balances the important considerations of heritage protection, public safety and landowners’ rights”.

Heritage EQUIP

On 12 August 2016, at an event in Feilding, then-Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Maggie Barry announced the Heritage Earthquake Upgrade Incentive Programme (Heritage EQUIP), which dedicated \$12 million over four years towards the cost of strengthening privately owned heritage buildings.⁸⁴ The contestable fund was open to privately owned Category 1 Heritage New Zealand listed buildings nationwide and Category 2 listed buildings in areas of high to medium seismic risk, with applicants expected to match the funding from local government, philanthropic and community sources, and their own funds. Applications were open by 16 December 2016 and closed on 10 February 2017.⁸⁵ Barry said: “We don’t want to see valued buildings empty and deteriorating, or even demolished, because it isn’t economical to strengthen them.”⁸⁶

In August 2017, Barry announced \$1.5 million from Heritage EQUIP towards the seismic strengthening of Auckland’s St James Theatre, so that it could keep operating. She described the 1928 building as having “significant cultural and heritage value”.⁸⁷

A 2025 government review later pointed to the fund’s results in Whanganui. Buildings in the Drews Avenue precinct that had been “vacant, derelict and unproductive for up to a decade” received \$178,451.25 from Heritage EQUIP, which the review described as now discontinued, and total restoration costs exceeded \$3 million.⁸⁸ The review said the tax intake from the restored buildings was estimated to be four times higher than the grant, and that Heritage EQUIP had been “attributed as an essential source of support and advice to overcome the numerous unexpected challenges and difficulties arising in the remediation process”.⁸⁹

⁸³ Chris Finlayson, “Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Bill Passes.”

⁸⁴ Sam Kilmister, “Government Announces \$12 Million to Support Quake-prone Heritage Buildings,” *Stuff*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/82951187/government-announces-12-million-to-support-quakeprone-heritage-buildings>; Maggie Barry, “\$12 Million to Support Quake-prone Heritage,” Press release, August 13, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/12-million-support-quake-prone-heritage>.

⁸⁵ Maggie Barry, “Heritage EQUIP Fund Open for Applications,” Press release, December 16, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/heritage-equip-fund-open-applications>.

⁸⁶ Barry, “\$12 Million to Support Quake-prone Heritage.”

⁸⁷ Maggie Barry, “Government Funding for Auckland’s St James Theatre,” Press release, August 12, 2017, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-funding-aucklands-st-james-theatre>.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” *Beehive: Official Website of the New Zealand Government* (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, June 2025), <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-09/Report%20of%20Seismic%20Risk%20Management%20Review.pdf>, 26–27.

⁸⁹ MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” 27.

Earthquake Prone Buildings Legislation

The Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016, passed by a National-led government, received Royal assent on 13 May 2016.⁹⁰ It set deadlines for owners to strengthen buildings of 15, 25 or 35 years, depending on local seismic risk. It also allowed owners of Category 1 listed heritage buildings, and buildings on the National Historic Landmarks List, to apply for up to 10 more years.⁹¹

In April 2024, Cabinet directed the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to review the system.⁹² While the review was under way, the National-led government extended the remediation deadline by four years for buildings whose deadlines had not lapsed before 2 April 2024, and allowed a further two years to be added. While the extension was not specific to heritage buildings, Building and Construction Minister Chris Penk said it was important to provide owners with “temporary relief from legal compliance and the threat of enforcement”.⁹³

The review’s June 2025 report found about 800 earthquake-prone heritage buildings scheduled on district plans and said that “heritage rules pose additional barriers to remediation”.⁹⁴ It added that heritage rules “make demolition, change of use or substantial alteration more complicated and expensive”, and that some heritage buildings were suffering from “demolition by neglect”.⁹⁵

In September 2025, Penk announced a refocused earthquake-prone building system, saying the cost of strengthening meant buildings were “often left empty and become derelict”.⁹⁶ Parliament passed the reforms unanimously, and the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2026 received Royal assent on 25 September 2026, coming into force on 1 July 2027.⁹⁷ From then, requirements apply only to unreinforced masonry buildings and tall buildings of heavy materials designed before 1976, in medium and high seismic zones. One and two-storey unreinforced masonry buildings need only their façades made safe in urban centres, and have no required work outside them, though they stay on the earthquake-prone building register. The government estimates the changes will save more than \$8.2 billion in remediation and demolition costs.⁹⁸ The Act removes the 2016 provision that let owners of Category 1 listed heritage buildings and National Historic Landmarks apply for up to 10 more years. In its place, any owner can ask the council for up to 15 years in total, and heritage status is one of six matters

⁹⁰ Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 (2016 No 22).

⁹¹ Building Act 2004, s 133AO(1)(b) and (4) (as in force until 30 June 2027).

⁹² MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” 6.

⁹³ Chris Penk, “More Certainty Around Earthquake-prone Buildings,” Press release, August 8, 2024, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/more-certainty-around-earthquake-prone-buildings>.

⁹⁴ MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” 26, 1.

⁹⁵ MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” 18, 26.

⁹⁶ Penk, “Earthquake-prone Building System Refocused.”

⁹⁷ Stuff, “Thousands of Buildings No Longer Deemed Earthquake-prone After New Law Passes Unanimously,” *Stuff*, September 19, 2026, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/politics/361035576/thousands-buildings-no-longer-deemed-earthquake-prone-after-new-law-passes-unanimously>; Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2026 (2026 No 68), s 2(1).

⁹⁸ Penk, “Earthquake-prone Building System Refocused”; Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2026 (2026 No 68), s 9, inserting Building Act 2004, ss 133AB(3), 133AB(6)(b) and 133AD(8).

the council must consider.⁹⁹

Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030

In August 2025, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Paul Goldsmith announced that the Government had published *Amplify*, the creative and cultural strategy for 2025 to 2030.¹⁰⁰ It describes heritage places as playing “an important role in preserving New Zealand’s history and cultural identity”, and says “it is important that heritage places are appropriately maintained”.¹⁰¹ *Amplify* also sets a combined target of a 10 per cent increase in New Zealanders attending arts events, heritage and cultural sites or activities, or New Zealand screen content by 2030.¹⁰² It cites HNZPT’s Saving the Town toolkit as showing that the conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings “can serve as a key driver for social and economic regeneration of our towns and cities”.¹⁰³ For owners, its supporting activity is exploring “regulatory solutions to address the cost burden of seismic risk in heritage buildings” as part of a review led by MBIE.¹⁰⁴

The strategy acknowledges that “there is a lack of suitably qualified staff in practices related to heritage conservation”, which “may add complexity and cost to the conservation and restoration of New Zealand’s heritage places”, and says the Government will explore options for succession planning for specialist roles “where expertise is at risk of being lost”, such as in cultural conservation.¹⁰⁵ It also says the Ministry for Culture and Heritage “will continue to support work to repatriate Māori and Moriori cultural heritage”, which the strategy describes as including taonga and ancestral remains.¹⁰⁶

Where National Falls Short

National’s heritage support is strongest where it helps owners or tourism and weakest where protection competes with development. Under the National-led government, Chris Bishop legislated to remove heritage protection from the Gordon Wilson Flats on grounds of economic cost, and announced the removal or modification of heritage provisions at sites in Wellington on housing, economic growth and employment grounds. Wider Budget savings have also cut funding for the agencies that look after heritage places. In practice, this makes protection

⁹⁹ Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2026 (2026 No 68), s 9, replacing subpart 6A of Part 2 of the Building Act 2004 and inserting ss 133AY and 133AZ(e). For the former provision, see Building Act 2004, s 133AO(1)(b) and (4) (as in force until 30 June 2027).

¹⁰⁰ Paul Goldsmith, “Government’s Creative Sector Strategy Goes Live,” Press release, August 28, 2025, <https://www.national.org.nz/news/20250828-hon-paul-goldsmith-governments-creative-sector-strategy-goes-live>.

¹⁰¹ Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH), “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” *Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage* (Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, August 28, 2025), <https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2025-09/Amplify-A-Creative-and-Cultural-Strategy-for-New-Zealand-2025-2030.pdf>, 32.

¹⁰² MCH, “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” 9.

¹⁰³ MCH, “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” 32.

¹⁰⁴ MCH, “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” 42; MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review.”

¹⁰⁵ MCH, “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” 26.

¹⁰⁶ MCH, “Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030,” 18.

something that has to justify itself against development, with the burden falling on heritage and not on the change proposed.

Gordon Wilson Flats

In August 2024, the Minister Responsible for RMA Reform, Chris Bishop, said he was “actively looking at the vexed issue of heritage listings and what people are allowed to do with heritage buildings”, and that New Zealand’s cities “can’t and shouldn’t be museums”.¹⁰⁷ At that point he had rejected Wellington City Council’s attempt to remove the flats’ heritage listing, citing insufficient evidence from the council.¹⁰⁸

However, in June 2025, Minister Bishop announced an amendment to remove heritage protection from the Gordon Wilson Flats in Wellington, making their demolition a permitted activity under the RMA 1991.¹⁰⁹ The flats, owned by Victoria University of Wellington, had been vacant since 2012, and both the university and Wellington City Council wanted them demolished. Bishop described the existing system as “a failed planning system that prioritises preservation of heritage, no matter the economic cost”.¹¹⁰ The release said Victoria University “may choose to demolish” the flats once the Bill was enacted, and would still need a demolition consent under the Building Act 2004 to manage hazardous materials, silt runoff, noise and dust. The change, which Bishop said would not apply to other heritage buildings, passed into law on 20 August 2025 as Section 85AAA of the RMA.¹¹¹ The university announced its demolition plans in December 2025, with the work expected to take about 12 months. With the protection gone, HNZPT Central Region director Dr. Jamie Jacobs said there was “no viable lever to compel Victoria University to reinvent this iconic building”.¹¹²

Wellington Heritage Provisions

The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025 made it faster and easier for councils to remove heritage buildings from district plans, while also adding Section 360I to the RMA, which enables the Minister Responsible for RMA Reform to modify or remove district plan provisions that negatively affect economic growth, development capacity or employment.¹¹³

In May 2026, Wellington City Council asked Bishop to use that power, and the investigation report he released on 3 August found that “some heritage provisions are having negative

¹⁰⁷ Hunt, “Heritage Battle Rumbles on Over Wellington Bungalow.”

¹⁰⁸ Hunt, “Heritage Battle Rumbles on Over Wellington Bungalow.”

¹⁰⁹ Chris Bishop, “Gordon Wilson Flats’ Heritage Protection Goneburger,” Press release, June 17, 2025, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/gordon-wilson-flats%E2%80%99-heritage-protection-goneburger>.

¹¹⁰ Bishop, “Gordon Wilson Flats’ Heritage Protection Goneburger.”

¹¹¹ Resource Management Act 1991, s 85AAA, inserted by Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025 (2025 No 41), s 27.

¹¹² Lyric Waiwiri-Smith, “Why Wellington’s Gordon Wilson Flats Won’t Go Down Until 2027,” *The Spinoff*, January 28, 2026, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/28-01-2026/why-wellingtons-gordon-wilson-flats-wont-go-down-until-2027>.

¹¹³ Resource Management Act 1991, s 360I, inserted by Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025 (2025 No 41), s 86; Bishop, “Consultation Opens on Wellington Heritage Provisions.”

impacts on economic growth and employment".¹¹⁴ The report covered the Karori Tunnel, the Kelburn Viaduct, the former General Headquarters (GHQ) building, a bulk oil storage tank in Miramar and height limits in the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Around 230 owners, occupiers and agencies, including HNZPT, were invited to respond first, before public comment opened for 10 days from 5 August.

On 1 October, after 162 submissions, Bishop announced that the heritage listings for the tunnel, viaduct and oil tank would be removed and the Courtenay Place height limits for non-heritage buildings modified, with Cabinet deciding that the heritage listing for the GHQ building would stay.¹¹⁵ He also acknowledged "the strength of public interest in Wellington's heritage" but said "Wellington needs planning rules that support investment, more housing and productive use of land and infrastructure". The release estimated that the Courtenay Place changes could enable about 550 additional apartments and \$200 million of construction supporting around 1,100 jobs, and that removing the oil tank's listing would allow commercial activity, including film studio facilities, for around 300 jobs. It also said the combined annual maintenance cost of the Karori Tunnel and Kelburn Viaduct, which had risen from about \$350,000 to around \$2.5 million, was partly tied to heritage listing requirements.¹¹⁶

Carrington Hospital's Building One

Asked at the bFM Votes candidates' debate on 12 October how action could be ensured on Building One at the former Carrington Hospital, National's Melissa Lee placed responsibility for Building One with those now responsible under the transfer of ownership, explaining that "part of that contract actually includes management of that land, and buildings...health and safety, and also looking after day to day operations of that site".¹¹⁷ She said she hoped "the people who have responsibility can actually...decide what they're going to do...fix it...or actually...build something that the community can actually feel happy about", and that "there needs to be consultation on that as well".¹¹⁸ Lee said "all of us...feel disappointed", but her answer did not call for action by National or the Government. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, now the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT), was responsible for the building until October 2025, when it handed ownership responsibilities to the developer.¹¹⁹ Lee was speaking as National's candidate at the debate, so these are a candidate's remarks, not party policy. Her answer is the only National position on the building this report found.

¹¹⁴ Bishop, "Consultation Opens on Wellington Heritage Provisions."

¹¹⁵ Chris Bishop, "Planning Changes to Support Wellington's Growth," Press release, October 1, 2026, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/planning-changes-support-wellingtons-growth>.

¹¹⁶ Bishop, "Planning Changes to Support Wellington's Growth."

¹¹⁷ 95bFM, "bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026," October 12, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwN1B8Tnygo>, 40:36.

¹¹⁸ 95bFM, "bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026," 41:02; Sam Smith, "Mt Albert Candidates Agree Derelict State of Former Psychiatric Hospital Must Be Addressed," *Stuff*, October 13, 2026, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/361045690/mt-albert-candidates-agree-derelict-state-former-psychiatric-hospital-must-be-addressed>.

¹¹⁹ Sam Smith, "Mt Albert Candidates Agree Derelict State of Former Psychiatric Hospital Must Be Addressed."

Budget Cuts to Heritage Funding

In Budget 2025, the National-led government cut HNZPT's operating funding by \$2 million a year from 2026/27, reducing its baseline from \$17.151 million to \$15.151 million – a fall of about 12 per cent.¹²⁰

The same Budget took a further \$2 million a year from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage from 2025/26, or \$8 million over four years.¹²¹ In September 2025 it was reported that the Ministry's restructure would disestablish the two historian positions at the education centre at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in December that year, and cut the carillonist's role after Anzac Day 2026.¹²² The Ministry's secretary, Leauanae Laulu Mac Leauanae, was also reported to have written in a July 2025 decision document that "Activation and non-commemoration-related engagement activity at Pukeahu will no longer be delivered by the ministry". The Ministry also noted that "Our education programme will continue to be delivered to the end of this school year, then we will be looking at our options".¹²³

When the Queen Elizabeth II Education Centre opened in August 2016, it was named in honour of the Queen as a 90th birthday gift from New Zealand. The Pukeahu education programme had already hosted more than 12,000 students before the centre opened, with then-Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Maggie Barry stating that "Its importance to the legacy of Pukeahu for our young people makes it a particularly fitting gift for Her Majesty".¹²⁴

Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Paul Goldsmith's office said the cuts were an "operational" matter for the Ministry.¹²⁵ Asked whether he would intervene over the carillon or education centre, Goldsmith said in a statement that the government's priority in the arts was to maintain grants available to the sector, and that "We're operating in a tight fiscal environment and tough decisions had to be made".¹²⁶

Budget 2025 also ended DOC's co-funding contribution to the Tohu Whenua Heritage Visitor Programme, worth \$130,000 a year.¹²⁷ The Budget document said that future decisions on the programme's scope and scale "will be determined by remaining contributors". The programme is a partnership between HNZPT and DOC, and in July 2025 the government announced \$4.5

¹²⁰ Willis, "Budget 2025: Summary of Initiatives," 9.

¹²¹ Willis, "Budget 2025: Summary of Initiatives," 9.

¹²² Phil Pennington, "Children's War History Lessons at National Memorial to End as Historians Lose Jobs," *Radio New Zealand*, September 4, 2025, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/572010/children-s-war-history-lessons-at-national-memorial-to-end-as-historians-lose-jobs>.

¹²³ Pennington, "Children's War History Lessons at National Memorial to End as Historians Lose Jobs."

¹²⁴ Maggie Barry, "Queen Elizabeth II Pukeahu Education Centre Opens," Press release, August 18, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/queen-elizabeth-ii-pukeahu-education-centre-opens>.

¹²⁵ Pennington, "Children's War History Lessons at National Memorial to End as Historians Lose Jobs."

¹²⁶ Pennington, "Children's War History Lessons at National Memorial to End as Historians Lose Jobs"; Julia Gabel, "Ministry of Culture and Heritage Mulling Restructure After \$2m Annual Funding Cut," *NZ Herald*, June 12, 2025, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/ministry-of-culture-and-heritage-mulling-restructure-after-2m-annual-funding-cut/UFMPGLURMVGWZO2COSCWWLSAPM/>.

¹²⁷ Willis, "Budget 2025: Summary of Initiatives," 17.

million over three years from the International Visitor Levy to extend it to more regions.¹²⁸ The expansion is paid for from the levy, so the programme is growing at the same time as the Department's own contribution has ended.

Budget 2026 then introduced further baseline savings across the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and 13 entities in Vote Arts, Culture and Heritage, including HNZPT, worth \$6.476 million in 2026/27 and \$27.077 million over five years.¹²⁹ The Budget document says the specific areas of savings "will be determined by entity boards or leadership teams", so HNZPT's share is not stated.

Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030

While supporting heritage and recognising the pressures it faces, the *Amplify* strategy commits little to relieving them. It places its action on heritage places under its pillar on "reducing barriers to growth", and says "Government recognises the need for heritage requirements to be simple and facilitate urban development so our country can plan for the future", and that owners "often struggle with conservation costs and requirements that are not nationally consistent".¹³⁰ It also says it "does not come with new central government funding", and its actions on heritage places and heritage skills are to explore regulatory solutions and options.¹³¹

The strategy describes its final phase, 2029 to 2030, as the "exploration of actions that require additional funding and/or significant collaboration with stakeholders".¹³² The Implementation Plan places the activity on succession planning for specialist roles in that phase, with cultural conservation as its example.¹³³ This report found HNZPT mentioned only once in the strategy, as the author of a toolkit, and DOC not at all – even though it manages the largest heritage portfolio in the country.¹³⁴

ACT Party

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Todd Stephenson

The ACT Party (ACT) positions itself as the party of individual freedom and personal responsibility, with its constitution holding that individuals "are the owners of their own lives and must be free to act according to their own judgments so long as they accept and respect the like

¹²⁸ Potaka, "Heritage Tourism Boost to Support Local Economies."

¹²⁹ Nicola Willis, "Budget 2026: Summary of Initiatives," *New Zealand Treasury* (New Zealand Treasury, May 28, 2026), <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2026-05/b26-sum-initiatives.pdf>, 7.

¹³⁰ MCH, "Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030," 8, 32.

¹³¹ MCH, "Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030," 13, 42.

¹³² MCH, "Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025-2030," 6.

¹³³ Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH), "Amplify: Implementation Plan," *Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage* (Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, August 28, 2025), https://www.mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2026-03/Amplify_2025-2030_Implementation-Plan_Mar-2026-update.pdf. The file name indicates a March 2026 update, but the document does not state its version date.

¹³⁴ Department of Conservation, "Our Heritage," 2026, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/heritage/>.

freedom of others.”¹³⁵ This principle of individual ownership and responsibility underpins ACT’s approach to heritage, framed primarily as a matter of private property rights and red tape, rather than any collective value a building, site or wider area may hold. Therefore, ACT tends to treat heritage protection as a restriction imposed on owners – one that must be justified, and where possible, reduced.

ACT’s view of heritage as a cost to owners predates the current government. In his 2017 State of the Nation speech, ACT Party Leader and MP for Epsom David Seymour proposed that the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area could be “taken back to a sensible boundary”. He cited a 50 hectare block of rural-zoned land in the foothills, three minutes’ drive from a train station, as land that should be freed up for housing: “there you have the New Zealand housing crisis in a nutshell.”¹³⁶ In 2022, ACT’s then-Conservation spokesperson Nicole McKee called a visitor cap on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing “a kick in the guts to local tourism operators”. McKee argued the government needed to “show clear evidence that this cap is required”, after the Department of Conservation said its aim was to “protect the dual world heritage values, both cultural and environmental in the Tongariro National Park.”¹³⁷

In 2023, Seymour commended the ministers who approved the demolition of the Mount Eden Shot Tower after Cyclone Gabrielle.¹³⁸ With some residents displaced for a week due to concerns about the structural integrity of the Category 1 tower – the last of its kind in Australasia – he argued that demolition must start immediately, adding that “the wider issue, for another time, is why so much bureaucracy was required in the first place.”¹³⁹ In February 2026, an ACT release by Resources spokesman Simon Court answered the late Sir Sam Neill’s campaign against the Santana gold mine in Central Otago by invoking the region’s mining past: “Gold mining is part of Central Otago’s heritage.”¹⁴⁰ The same release said projects “get bogged down by negative plonkers objecting on aesthetic grounds”, and pledged to back “productive enterprise that meets the rules over the aesthetic objections of woke, leftist film stars”.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ ACT New Zealand, “Constitution and Rules of ACT New Zealand,” ACT (ACT New Zealand, July 13, 2025), https://assets.nationbuilder.com/actnz/pages/24128/attachments/original/1752459529/250713_ACT_New_Zealand_Constitution.pdf?1752459529, 3.

¹³⁶ Simon Smith, “Protecting Heritage Land With ‘No Amenity’ Is the ‘Housing Crisis in a Nutshell’ – ACT,” *Stuff*, January 25, 2017, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/88731668/protecting-heritage-land-with-no-amenity-is-the-housing-crisis-in-a-nutshell--act>.

¹³⁷ ACT New Zealand, “Tourist Numbers Can’t Be Slashed for No Reason,” Press release, May 12, 2022, <https://www.act.org.nz/news/tourist-numbers-cant-be-slashed-for-no-reason>.

¹³⁸ ACT New Zealand, “Shot Tower Demolition Must Start Now,” Press release, February 20, 2023, <https://www.act.org.nz/news/shot-tower-demolition-must-start-now>.

¹³⁹ Karanama Ruru, “The Historic Tower That Was Pulled Down After Fears of Toppling During Cyclone Gabrielle,” *Stuff*, January 24, 2024, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/350151775/historic-tower-was-pulled-down-after-fears-toppling-during-cyclone-gabrielle>; ACT New Zealand, “Shot Tower Demolition Must Start Now.”

¹⁴⁰ ACT New Zealand, “Sam Neill Can’t Put Aesthetics Ahead of Livelihoods,” Press release, ACT New Zealand, February 20, 2026, <https://www.act.org.nz/news/sam-neill-can%E2%80%99t-put-aesthetics-ahead-of-livelihoods>.

¹⁴¹ ACT New Zealand, “Sam Neill Can’t Put Aesthetics Ahead of Livelihoods.”

Where ACT Supports Heritage

New Zealand Remembrance Army Commitment

The one heritage commitment this report found from ACT is support for restoring service graves. In April 2026, Veterans spokesperson Mark Cameron announced the party would back the New Zealand Remembrance Army, a volunteer group that has restored more than 300,000 service graves across Aotearoa New Zealand.¹⁴² True to its anti-red-tape positioning, ACT framed the commitment as cutting through council bureaucracy: Cameron said the group had to deal with “62 different councils” which had “different processes and interpretations of cemetery rules”.¹⁴³ ACT signalled it would:

- Require councils to accept grave restoration work under a national standard developed by Veterans’ Affairs in consultation with the Remembrance Army, “instead of under dozens of local rulebooks”.
- Designate the Remembrance Army and similar groups as nationally recognised heritage restoration partners.
- Remove additional red tape on organisations doing nationally significant work.

ACT said it was prepared to set aside up to \$1 million for this framework and a direct grant from the Crown to the Remembrance Army to clear the backlog of neglected graves.¹⁴⁴

Where ACT Falls Short

ACT’s heritage support is largely conditional on owner choice. Where protection is imposed on owners, ACT treats it as a restriction that councils must justify, and under the Regulatory Relief framework it championed (described below), councils may also have to compensate owners for imposing it. In practice, this makes heritage protection harder to defend, and this report found no answer from ACT on how councils would pay, which risks councils dropping protections rather than compensating owners.

ACT and Regulatory Relief

As part of the coalition government’s reform of the RMA, ACT championed a regulatory relief framework, where local government “must provide practical relief mechanisms when imposing restrictions such as heritage protections and significant natural areas.”¹⁴⁵ This reform, according to Parliamentary Under-Secretary for RMA Reform and Infrastructure, ACT’s Simon Court, would put property rights “at the core”, and force local government to justify restrictions that “for too

¹⁴² Mark Cameron, “ACT Will Back Volunteers Who Restore War Graves,” Press release, April 24, 2026, <https://www.act.org.nz/news/act-will-back-volunteers-who-restore-war-graves>.

¹⁴³ Cameron, “ACT Will Back Volunteers Who Restore War Graves.”

¹⁴⁴ Cameron, “ACT Will Back Volunteers Who Restore War Graves.”

¹⁴⁵ Chris Bishop and Simon Court, “A Better Planning System for a Better New Zealand,” Press release, December 9, 2025, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/better-planning-system-better-new-zealand>.

long have been costless to them”.¹⁴⁶ Announcing Cabinet’s decisions in March 2025, Court said that the “best way to stop unnecessary red tape is [to] attach a price to it”, with landowners able to seek compensation if “unjustified restrictions have been placed on their land.”¹⁴⁷ In December 2025, Party Leader and Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour made a similar point, stating that “for decades, councils could load rules onto private land as if the cost was zero”.¹⁴⁸ On 22 September 2026, the Planning Bill and Natural Environment Bill passed their third reading. Simon Court said that “Regulatory relief will discipline over-zealous councils by forcing them to face the cost of specified ‘public good’ controls over private property”.¹⁴⁹

New Zealand First

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Jenny Marcroft

NZ First promotes itself as the party that stands for “national pride” and for protecting the “national identity” of Aotearoa New Zealand – the terms Peters used in July 2025 to justify a bill limiting the flags that government buildings may fly.¹⁵⁰ Heritage appears explicitly in the party’s purpose statement, with NZ First aspiring to be “an enduring voice of common sense that protects our natural and cultural heritage”.¹⁵¹ In his “One Clarion Call” speech closing the party’s 32nd Convention in Palmerston North on 7 September 2025, Peters declared: “We are all New Zealanders, the heirs of a once world leading country now seeking to restore that heritage for our children and generations yet to come.”¹⁵² NZ First’s policy commitments to heritage are largely concentrated on tourism and conservation, with heritage consistently framed in economic terms.

Where NZ First Supports Heritage

NZ First’s 2023 manifesto included two commitments that mention heritage. Under “Tourism and Destination Management”, it proposed to “use tourism to protect, restore and champion New Zealand’s natural environment, culture and heritage”.¹⁵³ Under “Conservation”, it proposed to “enhance and protect the rights of all New Zealanders to access their cultural heritage sites

¹⁴⁶ Bishop and Court, “A Better Planning System for a Better New Zealand.”

¹⁴⁷ Chris Bishop and Simon Court, “New Planning Laws to End the Culture of ‘No,’” Press release, March 24, 2025, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-planning-laws-end-culture-%E2%80%98no%E2%80%9999>.

¹⁴⁸ ACT New Zealand, “Regulatory Standards Shine Through in New Planning System,” Press release, ACT New Zealand, December 11, 2025, <https://www.act.org.nz/news/regulatory-standards-shine-through-in-new-planning-system>.

¹⁴⁹ Chris Bishop and Simon Court, “RMA Era Ends as New System Passes Parliament,” Press release, September 22, 2026, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/rma-era-ends-new-system-passes-parliament>.

¹⁵⁰ New Zealand First, “NZ First Bill: Only Official New Zealand Flag to Fly on Government Buildings,” Press release, July 2, 2025, https://www.nzfirst.nz/nzf_bill_only_official_nz_flag.

¹⁵¹ New Zealand First, “About Us: Purpose and Principles,” 2026, <https://www.nzfirst.nz/principle>.

¹⁵² Winston Peters, “One Clarion Call” (Palmerston North, September 7, 2025), https://www.nzfirst.nz/one_clarion_call.

¹⁵³ New Zealand First, “New Zealand First 2023 Policies,” *New Zealand First* (New Zealand First, 2023), https://www.nzfirst.nz/2023_policies.

through clarifying and amending legislation associated with protecting these heritage sites, buildings and objects”.¹⁵⁴

KiwiRail and the Rail Heritage Trust

NZ First has delivered one measurable heritage outcome this term. As Minister for Rail, NZ First leader Rt Hon Winston Peters asked KiwiRail to lift its annual \$120,000 contribution to the Rail Heritage Trust, to further support the restoration of industrial heritage across the country. On 28 August 2025, Peters announced that the KiwiRail board, chaired by Suzanne Tindal, had decided to increase the contribution to \$500,000 per annum, making the announcement at Mātaura Railway Station in Southland – the first site to benefit from the funding boost.¹⁵⁵ Both the speech and accompanying press release were titled “Demolition by Neglect Stops Here”, with Peters declaring that “only fools steam ahead without any knowledge of where they have been, and communities that value their past are not fools.”¹⁵⁶

Complete the Christchurch Cathedral

Of the parties reviewed for this report, this report found that NZ First is the only one to have announced a policy dedicated to a built heritage site this election cycle: “Complete the Christchurch Cathedral”. On 27 March 2026, NZ First Party Leader Winston Peters announced a campaign commitment of an extra \$15 million to the rebuild of Christ Church Cathedral – mothballed since 2014 because of lack of funds, with a remaining shortfall of \$40 to \$45 million.¹⁵⁷ Peters described the cathedral as a “vitally iconic symbol of Christchurch City” and “part of the city’s heritage”, and said that “rebuilding the cathedral will catalyse further development around the area and boost important tourism numbers in the city.”¹⁵⁸ The funding boost would help complete the first stage of the project, which would reopen the cathedral and remove the hoardings from Cathedral Square. In the announcement, Peters pointed to the \$25 million government contribution he said NZ First “ensured” when last in government in 2018 – made up of a \$10 million grant and a \$15 million interest-free loan.¹⁵⁹ The release does not say whether the new \$15 million would be a grant or a loan.

The pledge is far from new. On 28 May 2017, before that year’s election, Peters stood in front of the damaged cathedral and promised to restore it if NZ First held power. At the time, National Party Christchurch Regeneration Minister Nicky Wagner called it “grandstanding”, stating that

¹⁵⁴ New Zealand First, “New Zealand First 2023 Policies.”

¹⁵⁵ Winston Peters, “Demolition by Neglect Stops Here” (Mātaura, August 28, 2025), https://www.nzfirst.nz/demolition_by_neglect_stops_here.

¹⁵⁶ Peters, “Demolition by Neglect Stops Here,” August 28, 2025; Winston Peters, “Demolition by Neglect Stops Here,” Press release, August 28, 2025, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/demolition-neglect-stops-here>.

¹⁵⁷ New Zealand First, “NZ First Campaign Announcement: Funding for Christ Church Cathedral Rebuild,” Press release, March 27, 2026, https://www.nzfirst.nz/campaign_announcement_funding_for_christ_church_cathedral_rebuild.

¹⁵⁸ New Zealand First, “Complete the Christchurch Cathedral,” 2026, https://www.nzfirst.nz/complete_the_christchurch_cathedral.

¹⁵⁹ New Zealand First, “Complete the Christchurch Cathedral”.

Peters had “said exactly the same thing in 2014”.¹⁶⁰ NZ First *did* enter government after the 2017 election. However, nine years later in 2026, the cathedral is still mothballed, and Peters is again making a funding pledge in an election year.

Where NZ First Falls Short

NZ First’s most significant effect on heritage places this term came through the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, described below, which moved decisions on archaeological authorities from HNZPT to a panel directed to give the greatest weight to the Act’s own purpose of facilitating development. Its other heritage commitments are narrow. While the KiwiRail funding increase helps one trust, it does not change the law that allows demolition by neglect in the first place, despite the title of the announcement. Demolition by neglect continues to occur across the country. Likewise, while the cathedral policy is titled “Complete the Christchurch Cathedral”, the \$15 million would fund only the first stage of the rebuild, which faces a remaining shortfall of \$40 to \$45 million, with the rest left to the Church and Christchurch City Council. The Christ Church Cathedral is ultimately a single, high-profile building, justified mainly on tourism and economic grounds, and Peters made a similar pledge in 2017.

The same economic framing extends to natural heritage. When the Green Party objected to a prospecting permit covering 157 square kilometres of Te Wāhipounamu, one of New Zealand’s three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Resources Minister Shane Jones said that New Zealand had “been able to maintain luxury beliefs such as not mining the DOC estate” and that “We’re going to have to open up areas of the DOC estate for development, if we can have the correct guardrails and mitigation initiatives”.¹⁶¹

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

NZ First’s Shane Jones, as Minister for Regional Development, joined the Minister Responsible for RMA Reform, Chris Bishop, in announcing the third reading of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 on 17 December 2024, with Bishop describing it as “part of the coalition agreement between National and NZ First”.¹⁶² Its purpose is “to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits”.¹⁶³ The Act replaces separate approval processes with a single application to an expert panel, which decides whether to approve a project and sets any conditions.¹⁶⁴ That includes archaeological

¹⁶⁰ Michael Wright and Jamie Small, “NZ First Leader Winston Peters ‘Grandstanding’ Over Christ Church Cathedral Debacle, Regeneration Minister Nicky Wagner Says,” *Stuff*, May 28, 2017, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/93068880/new-zealand-first-leader-winston-peters-critical-of-cathedral-debacle>.

¹⁶¹ Felix Walton, “Green Party Disapproves of Government Granting Prospecting Permit for UNESCO Site,” *Radio New Zealand*, April 27, 2026, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/593506/green-party-disapproves-of-government-granting-prospecting-permit-for-unesco-site>.

¹⁶² Chris Bishop and Shane Jones, “One-stop Shop Fast-track Bill Passes Third Reading,” Press release, December 17, 2024, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/one-stop-shop-fast-track-bill-passes-third-reading>.

¹⁶³ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (2024 No 56), s 3.

¹⁶⁴ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, s 81(1).

authorities, which would otherwise be sought from HNZPT under the HNZPT Act. HNZPT and the Māori Heritage Council report to the panel and can recommend that an authority be granted with conditions or declined, but the panel makes the decision.

In deciding an application for an archaeological authority, the panel must take into account the matters in the HNZPT Act, while giving the greatest weight to the purpose of the Fast-track Approvals Act itself.¹⁶⁵ The same weighting applies to resource consents, where the panel must consider the Resource Management Act's Part 2 matters, which include protecting historic heritage, but again must give the greatest weight to the Act's purpose.¹⁶⁶ A panel may decline an approval because of adverse impacts only where they are "sufficiently significant to be out of proportion to the project's regional or national benefits", and it cannot reach that view solely because an impact is inconsistent with a provision of a specified Act – a term that includes the HNZPT Act.¹⁶⁷

The Act also limits who must be invited to comment. At the referral stage, the Minister must invite comments from local authorities, certain Ministers, Māori groups, owners of Māori land and the relevant administering agencies, which include HNZPT for the HNZPT Act, and may invite any other person.¹⁶⁸ At the panel stage, the panel must invite comments from groups including local authorities, iwi, the owners and occupiers of the land and adjoining land, and relevant Ministers and administering agencies.¹⁶⁹ This report found no heritage or community organisations among the groups the Act requires to be invited, so they have no right to comment unless invited at the Minister's discretion.

Labour Party

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Rachel Boyack

Labour describes its purpose as ensuring that "no matter who you are or where you come from, everyone deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential and live life to the fullest".¹⁷⁰ The party has historically supported arts, culture and heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand, with its 1999 manifesto for Arts, Culture and Heritage stating that "historical heritage is a legacy which we hold in trust for future generations".¹⁷¹ At time of publication, this report found no Labour heritage policy. The only arts, culture and heritage policy listed for Labour on the policy website policy.nz concerned data sovereignty and copyright, so that creators keep control of – and are

¹⁶⁵ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, sch 8, cl 4(1) and (2).

¹⁶⁶ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, sch 5, cl 17(1) and (2)(a); Resource Management Act 1991, s 6(f).

¹⁶⁷ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, s 85(3) and (4).

¹⁶⁸ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, ss 4 (definition of "administering agency"), 17(1) and 17(5).

¹⁶⁹ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, s 53(2) and sch 5, cl 13.

¹⁷⁰ Labour Party, "NZ Labour Party," Labour Party, 2026, <https://www.labour.org.nz/>.

¹⁷¹ 1999 manifesto quoted in: Judith Tizard, "Heritage, Identity and Our Shared Future" (Christchurch, October 13, 2000), <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/heritage-identity-and-our-shared-future>.

paid for – work used by AI.¹⁷²

Where Labour Supports Heritage

In a speech opening Carter Group Heritage Week in Christchurch on 13 October 2000, then-Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Judith Tizard described arts, culture and heritage as “not an optional extra but a necessity for a civilised society”. Built heritage, she argued, matters because “the existence of our built, physical, material heritage enables compelling evidence of the past to be available for interpretation or review by present and future generations”, and “the more of our heritage that is preserved, the stronger the basis for the evolution of knowledge”.¹⁷³ The government, Tizard said, envisaged “a partnership between central government, local government, iwi and private property owners” to achieve “the protection and restoration of historic heritage”. The Prime Minister taking on the arts, culture and heritage portfolio was “an absolutely key indicator of the status accorded the sector by the government”, and a May funding announcement had increased support for heritage and museum activities, including Te Papa and the conservation of the Edwin Fox.¹⁷⁴ A year of policy work on heritage management, overseen by the Minister with Tizard’s assistance, would include preparing legislation to protect moveable cultural property and advice on “enhanced arrangements for the protection of land-based historic heritage”.¹⁷⁵

In June 2025, Labour’s Arts, Culture and Heritage spokesperson Rachel Boyack said that cuts at Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage sat amid wider public service cuts by the National-led government, and that “Telling our history, telling the stories of the nation, is an essential part of who we are as a nation”.¹⁷⁶

Funding and Protecting the Historic Places Trust

In 2000, the Labour-led government moved to strengthen the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, the statutory agency created under the Historic Places Act – now Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT). On 21 February, Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Helen Clark announced that the government had cancelled the previous National government’s decision to make the Trust’s funding contestable from 1 July 2000, with the associated press release claiming it was “an indication of the priority that the new government placed on the protection of New Zealand’s historic sites and places”.¹⁷⁷ On 18 May, the government announced \$3 million for the Trust that financial year to establish a Preservation Fund: \$1.25

¹⁷² Labour Party, “Policies for Party Vote - NZ Election 2026 - Policy.nz,” Policy.nz, 2026, <https://policy.nz/2026/party-vote/policies/media-culture-and-recreation/policy/POL54946>.

¹⁷³ Tizard, “Heritage, Identity and Our Shared Future.”

¹⁷⁴ Tizard, “Heritage, Identity and Our Shared Future.”

¹⁷⁵ Tizard, “Heritage, Identity and Our Shared Future.”

¹⁷⁶ Tom Hunt, “Protesters Claim Cuts Will ‘Decimate’ Heritage Staff,” *The Post*, June 17, 2025, <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/360725891/protesters-claim-cuts-will-decimate-heritage-staff>.

¹⁷⁷ Helen Clark, “Government Removes Threat to Historic Places Trust,” Press release, February 21, 2000, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-removes-threat-historic-places-trust>.

million for deferred maintenance and development at Crown-owned properties the Trust manages, \$1.25 million for a Māori heritage development fund and \$500,000 to upgrade the national register of New Zealand's heritage. The Trust's operating budget also rose by \$170,000 that year, with an annual increase of \$500,000 in following years, which Clark said would let the Trust meet its statutory obligations, including prosecuting breaches of the Historic Places Act.¹⁷⁸ In October 2000, Associate Minister Judith Tizard said the government was not supportive of any provisions in the Resource Management Amendment Bill "that would alter or reduce the role of the Historic Places Trust".¹⁷⁹

Heritage EQUIP

Heritage EQUIP (the Heritage Earthquake Upgrade Incentive Programme) was a four-year earthquake-strengthening fund for privately owned heritage buildings, introduced by the National government in 2016 to help owners meet the requirements of the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 (see "Heritage EQUIP" under "Where National Supports Heritage").¹⁸⁰ The Labour-led government elected in 2017 continued the programme, with Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Grant Robertson announcing in February 2019 that owners in regional, medium and high seismic risk areas would receive extra support.¹⁸¹ These owners became eligible for new Professional Advice Grants covering up to 50 per cent of costs, to a maximum of \$50,000.¹⁸² Many regional building owners could also apply for up to 67 per cent of upgrade works costs, compared with 50 per cent elsewhere, to a maximum grant of \$400,000, and multiple-building applications could seek up to 67 per cent of professional advice costs.¹⁸³ Budget 2020 added \$3.12 million, extending the programme for a further year (see "Heritage EQUIP Funding Not Renewed in Budget 2021" under "Where Labour Falls Short").¹⁸⁴

St James Theatre Funding

On 22 July 2023, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Carmel Sepuloni announced that the government had agreed to a conditional \$15 million contribution towards conserving the St

¹⁷⁸ Helen Clark, "New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Pouhere Taonga)," Press release, May 18, 2000, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-zealand-historic-places-trust-pouhere-taonga>.

¹⁷⁹ Tizard, "Heritage, Identity and Our Shared Future."

¹⁸⁰ Maggie Barry, "\$12 Million to Support Quake-prone Heritage," Press release, August 13, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/12-million-support-quake-prone-heritage>.

¹⁸¹ Grant Robertson, "Better Regional Assistance for Earthquake-prone Heritage Buildings," Press release, February 11, 2019, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/better-regional-assistance-earthquake-prone-heritage-buildings>.

¹⁸² Grant Robertson, "Better Regional Assistance for Earthquake-prone Heritage Buildings"; Adam Burns, "Leaders Welcome Help for Heritage Buildings," *Otago Daily Times*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.odt.co.nz/otago/central-otago/leaders-welcome-help-for-heritage-buildings-amg8iv4r>.

¹⁸³ Robertson, "Better Regional Assistance for Earthquake-prone Heritage Buildings"; Mary-Jo Tohill, "Funding Shake-up for Earthquake-prone Buildings," *Stuff*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/114815210/funding-shakeup-for-earthquakeprone-buildings>.

¹⁸⁴ New Zealand Treasury, "Wellbeing Budget 2020 - Rebuilding Together," *New Zealand Treasury* (New Zealand Treasury, May 14, 2020), <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-05/b20-wellbeing-budget.pdf>, 53; Grant Robertson, "Government Provides \$2.2m to Heritage Buildings for Quake Strengthening," Press release, August 5, 2020, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-provides-22m-heritage-buildings-quake-strengthening>.

James Theatre. The contribution would match, and was contingent on, a \$15 million pledge from Auckland Council, and would sit alongside funding from the theatre's owner, with further conditions to be developed through engagement with HNZPT, mana whenua and the community. Sepuloni said the contribution "underlines not only the importance of protecting our heritage buildings, but the significance of the theatre's place in our history", and that "Successive Governments have signalled their support for the project".¹⁸⁵ By February 2025, Auckland Council had confirmed its \$15 million grant as part of an agreement with central government and the theatre's owner.¹⁸⁶ By 1 August 2025, the National-led coalition government had confirmed the commitment, and the Crown's contribution of \$16.5 million had been paid to the council after 25 funding conditions were met.¹⁸⁷

Labour MPs and Heritage Buildings

Two Labour MPs have spoken publicly, in their own names, about the challenges facing heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand. This report found no evidence at time of publication that these positions have been adopted as Labour policy.

On 28 July 2016, in a Labour press release titled "Council must build on heritage, not destroy it", Arts, Culture and Heritage spokesperson (and later Prime Minister) Jacinda Ardern criticised an Auckland Unitary Plan panel recommendation to remove some protections from neighbourhoods with pre-1944 houses.¹⁸⁸ Ardern accepted that Auckland needed to "build both up and out in order to meet the huge demand for housing", but said "there are ways to do that without losing the character of our communities". Heritage, she argued, should not be "an either/or": "We're a young country when it comes to built heritage and we should be doing everything we can to preserve what we have."¹⁸⁹

Helen White on Demolition by Neglect

In August 2026, Labour MP for Mt Albert Helen White called for better protections for historic buildings, after learning about properties like Grey Lynn's Carlile House and Building One at the former Carrington Hospital. Both are Category 1 historic places and scheduled as Category A

¹⁸⁵ Carmel Sepuloni, "Government Helps to Unlock the Doors of St James Theatre," Press release, July 22, 2023, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-helps-unlock-doors-st-james-theatre>; Radio New Zealand, "'We Did It' - \$15m Government Pledge to Help Restore Auckland's St James Theatre," *Radio New Zealand*, July 22, 2023, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/494253/we-did-it-15m-government-pledge-to-help-restore-auckland-s-st-james-theatre>.

¹⁸⁶ Auckland Council, "Council Backs Funding for Auckland's St James Theatre," *Our Auckland*, February 28, 2025, <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2025/02/council-backs-funding-for-auckland-s-st-james-theatre/>.

¹⁸⁷ While the 2023 announcement referred to a \$15 million Crown contribution, Newsroom reported \$16.5 million had been paid. This report did not find an explanation of the difference. See Tim Murphy, "Finally, the Stars and Dollars Align to Save an Auckland Jewel," *Newsroom*, August 1, 2025, <https://newsroom.co.nz/2025/08/01/finally-the-stars-and-dollars-align-to-save-an-auckland-jewel/>.

¹⁸⁸ Jacinda Ardern, "Council Must Build on Heritage, Not Destroy It," *Scoop News*, July 28, 2016, <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1607/S00413/council-must-build-on-heritage-not-destroy-it.htm>.

¹⁸⁹ Ardern, "Council Must Build on Heritage, Not Destroy It."

historic heritage in the Auckland Unitary Plan.¹⁹⁰ White called the situation “simply unacceptable” and said she had met officials from MCERT, who “are in a situation where they don’t believe they can influence the protection of the building”. She said there was “a real gap in the law here that needs plugging”.¹⁹¹

“Fairly early in becoming an electorate MP”, White noticed the deterioration of Carlile House, making several enquiries only to find that “there just really weren’t the tools in the toolbox to deal with that situation effectively”.¹⁹² When the same appeared to be happening to the Carrington buildings, she “had real alarm bells” and wanted to give councils more teeth to enforce the rules.¹⁹³ She was considering a members’ bill that would make it an obligation for owners or managers of heritage buildings to protect them from neglect, with rewards for doing so.¹⁹⁴ The proposed bill would require anyone taking on a protected building to “at least protect the status quo”, and White acknowledged that extra funds might be needed for maintenance, adding that “Historic buildings have gone through a process where we’ve decided that they’re really important to the neighbourhood, and to the nation”.¹⁹⁵

When asked at the Great Mt Albert Debate on 30 September 2026 whether they would “fight to save the former Carrington Hospital”, White was the only candidate to raise her hand.¹⁹⁶ At the later bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026 on 12 October, all four candidates, from Labour, the Greens, Opportunity and National, agreed that something needed to be done about the state of Building One. White said she had repeatedly written to Marutūāhu director Paul Majurey on behalf of a group “prepared to fix the roof”, and had “no answer yet”.¹⁹⁷ She was “a bit shocked” that no one else had raised their hand at the Great Mt Albert Debate, and said the building “matters to people in our community”. At the debate she committed to the bill: “If you take on a building with that kind of heritage status you owe it to the community to at least preserve the status quo – so I’m going to introduce that Bill and I’d love you to support me.”¹⁹⁸ She urged the other candidates to “join me on this one”, acknowledging the sensitivities and the

¹⁹⁰ Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, “Costley Training Institute (Former),” 2026, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/9584/Costley-Training-Institute-Former>; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, “Carrington Hospital (Former),” 2026, [https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/96/Carrington%20Hospital%20\(Former\)](https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/96/Carrington%20Hospital%20(Former)); Auckland Council, “Auckland Unitary Plan Schedule 14.1 Schedule of Historic Heritage,” *Auckland Council* (Auckland Council, July 2026), <https://unitaryplan.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/images/Auckland%20Unitary%20Plan%20Operative/Chapter%20L%20Schedules/Schedule%2014.1%20Schedule%20of%20Historic%20Heritage.pdf>, 54, 63.

¹⁹¹ Sam Smith, “Local MP Seeks Law Change as Historic Auckland Building Falls Into Ruin,” *Stuff*, August 13, 2026, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/361019736/local-mp-seeks-law-change-historic-auckland-building-falls-ruin>.

¹⁹² Morning Report, “Auckland MP Calls for Better Protections for Historic Buildings,” audio, in “Auckland MP Considers Members Bill to Strengthen Protections for Historic Buildings,” Radio New Zealand, 14 August 2026, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/regions/1000168/auckland-mp-considers-members-bill-to-strengthen-protections-for-historic-buildings>, 1:00.

¹⁹³ Morning Report, “Auckland MP Calls for Better Protections for Historic Buildings,” 1:22.

¹⁹⁴ Smith, “Local MP Seeks Law Change as Historic Auckland Building Falls Into Ruin.”

¹⁹⁵ Morning Report, “Auckland MP Calls for Better Protections for Historic Buildings,” 1:56.

¹⁹⁶ “The Great Mt Albert Debate | The Spinoff,” September 30, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZO7gu6rhQg>, 14:04.

¹⁹⁷ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 42:04.

¹⁹⁸ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 43:08.

cost but arguing that “it’s not actually getting any cheaper if you leave those tiles off the roof”.¹⁹⁹

An MCERT spokesperson said the developer, Marutūāhu Ockham Limited No.6 Partnership, “has the same obligations and responsibilities as any other owner of a heritage building”, and Auckland Council issued a bylaw notice over the building’s security in May 2026.²⁰⁰

Where Labour Falls Short

Labour’s most visible recent advocacy for heritage places comes from one MP, Helen White, and not from the portfolio spokesperson, Rachel Boyack. While Boyack has criticised the National-led government’s cuts to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, this report found no statement from her setting out what Labour would do for heritage.²⁰¹ White’s members’ bill on demolition by neglect – which she has said she will introduce – is the only concrete heritage proposal this report found from a Labour MP. Heritage advocacy within Labour therefore currently seems to rest on one MP, without a party policy behind it.

Heritage EQUIP Funding Not Renewed in Budget 2021

Budget 2020 provided \$3.12 million for 2020/21 “to continue the Heritage EQUIP programme”, citing “increased demand arising from compliance with earthquake-prone buildings’ regulatory requirements”, but this report found no funding for the programme in Budget 2021.²⁰² In August 2021, Historic Places Aotearoa (HPA) president James Blackburne raised concern about the loss of Heritage EQUIP funding, warning that “time is running out for owners to strengthen priority buildings in areas of high seismic risk” and that “demolition may be the only option for some owners if funding is not available”.²⁰³ A 2025 government review describes the programme as discontinued.²⁰⁴

Green Party

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Kahurangi Carter

Part of the Green Party’s vision is to be “good ancestors so that our environment can be enjoyed

¹⁹⁹ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 42:50, 41:55.

²⁰⁰ Sam Smith, “Local MP Seeks Law Change as Historic Auckland Building Falls Into Ruin.”

²⁰¹ Tom Hunt, “Protesters Claim Cuts Will ‘Decimate’ Heritage Staff.”

²⁰² New Zealand Treasury, “Wellbeing Budget 2020 - Rebuilding Together,” 53; New Zealand Treasury, “Wellbeing Budget 2021 - Securing Our Recovery,” *New Zealand Treasury* (New Zealand Treasury, May 20, 2021), <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-07/b21-wellbeing-budget-v2.pdf>.

²⁰³ Historic Places Aotearoa, “Loss of Heritage EQUIP Funding a Blow,” Press release, August 11, 2021, <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK2108/S00175/loss-of-heritage-equip-funding-a-blow.htm>. The author is an executive member of Historic Places Aotearoa, but was not associated with the organisation when these comments were made in August 2021; Ethan Griffiths, “Whanganui Concerns Raised After Heritage Earthquake-strengthening Programme Scrapped,” *NZ Herald*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/whanganui-chronicle/news/whanganui-concerns-raised-after-heritage-earthquake-strengthening-programme-scrapped/37U4JWJQ7LENFR2DXSBBA5HIQM/>.

²⁰⁴ MBIE, “Earthquake-prone Building System and Seismic Risk Management Review,” 26.

for generations to come.”²⁰⁵ The party, known especially for its focus on the environment, frames heritage through this lens, along with communities, housing and Māori leadership. Its main heritage policy is the Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy, with further commitments in its Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy. Both state the same strategic goal: “People will be part of caring communities with a strong heritage fabric”.²⁰⁶

Two Green MPs have questioned whose heritage is being protected. At the bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026 on 12 October, Green MP Ricardo Menéndez March said “demolition by neglect is definitely not okay” but did not commit to White’s bill on it. Menéndez March added that “we also need to be mindful of us just imposing what that building should be for”, noting that the land had been “given back to mana whenua”, and asked the debate panel “whose heritage are we looking after?”²⁰⁷ In *Under the Surface*, a 2024 short documentary about heritage and housing in Wellington, Green MP Tamatha Paul said the term heritage was “often referring to Pākehā heritage”, that it was “decided by whoever has the power to decide it”, and that “once something is heritage protected it is almost untouchable”.²⁰⁸ These are statements by individual MPs, not Green Party policy.

Where the Greens Support Heritage

The Greens’ most visible heritage campaign this report found is the Save St James Theatre campaign in Auckland, but their most direct proposals on heritage are in policy.

Section 5 of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy, “Protecting and Preserving our Heritage”, is the Greens’ main statement on built heritage.²⁰⁹ It identifies “significant challenges in protecting and preserving built heritage, including cost, seismic and climate risks, and pressures from urban development”, notes that “neglected buildings require expensive fixes to avoid demolition”, and states that “heritage losses are irreplaceable”. Its actions fall into two groups:

1. To “strengthen heritage policy and funding”, it commits to “establishing national direction for heritage, requiring local authorities to place more weight on recognising and supporting heritage places in district plans” (5.1.1), and “providing funding schemes for the maintenance and earthquake strengthening of privately-owned heritage buildings” (5.1.2).

²⁰⁵ Green Party, “About Us,” 2026, <https://www.greens.org.nz/about>.

²⁰⁶ Green Party, “Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy,” *Green Party* (Green Party, June 17, 2026), https://assets.nationbuilder.com/beachheroes/pages/64500/attachments/original/1781650645/Policy-Greens_Arts_Culture_Heritage_Policy_2014-2026.pdf?1781650645, 2; Green Party, “Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy,” *Green Party* (Green Party, June 17, 2026), https://assets.nationbuilder.com/beachheroes/pages/64752/attachments/original/1781650001/Policy-Greens_Housing_and_Sustainable_Communities_Policy_2022-2026.pdf?1781650001, 2.

²⁰⁷ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 38:20, 38:34, 38:32, 43:18.

²⁰⁸ Paul in Nate Oakley, “Under the Surface (2024) - Documentary Short Film,” YouTube video, March 26, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS8a8BuZFLI>, 3:23, 3:00, 1:26.

²⁰⁹ Green Party, “Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy,” Section 5.

2. To “enhance Māori and community leadership and engagement in heritage protection”, it commits to programmes that “enable communities to safely explore the diversity and tensions in local heritage and traditions” (5.2.1), more support for Te Papa’s National Services to assist local museums and galleries with heritage collections (5.2.2), “prioritising areas of cultural value to communities, whānau, hapū and iwi when resourcing climate change adaptation” (5.2.3), and resourcing artistic and community activities that challenge “entrenched harmful narratives” (5.2.4).

Section 5 also recognises that heritage extends beyond built form. It states that “negative and systemic biases towards built and colonial heritage sideline and erode pre-colonial history, wāhi tapu, stories, and skills”, and 5.2.3 ties that recognition to climate adaptation funding. The housing policy makes a similar commitment: as part of its aim to “seek to return whenua Māori to Māori ownership and restore the rights of Māori as its kaitiaki”, it would include “the return of Māori land in climate change adaptation and heritage protection programmes” (1.3.2).

On 27 April 2026, Green resources spokesperson Steve Abel called the government’s approval of a prospecting permit within Te Wāhipounamu – one of New Zealand’s three UNESCO World Heritage Sites – “utterly unacceptable”, saying heritage areas like this should be “out of bounds” to exploration, prospecting and mining.²¹⁰ The permit allows prospecting across 157 square kilometres of the World Heritage Site for every mineral except uranium. Resources Minister Shane Jones defended the permit as “innocuous”, arguing the permit holder only wants a “relatively small area” and will not be performing any physical interventions.²¹¹

A more indirect form of support for older buildings appears in the Greens’ housing policy. The party encourages the “relocation and renovation of existing timber houses” where sites are redeveloped or intensified, or where a house is at risk from natural hazards (3.8.2).²¹² The policy frames this as reducing construction waste and does not mention heritage, but keeping existing houses in use is consistent with the “strong heritage fabric” its strategic priorities describe.

St James Theatre

Closed in 2007 after a fire in a neighbouring building, the Category 1 St James Theatre in Auckland had only just reopened when an electrical fault started a fire in July 2015, after which it hosted pop-up events until 2016.²¹³ In 2022, Auckland Central MP Chlöe Swarbrick, now the party’s co-leader, released a video as part of the Save St James Theatre campaign, highlighting the deteriorating condition of the building and the significant impact of vandalism and break-

²¹⁰ Walton, “Green Party Disapproves of Government Granting Prospecting Permit for UNESCO Site.”

²¹¹ Walton, “Green Party Disapproves of Government Granting Prospecting Permit for UNESCO Site.”

²¹² Green Party, “Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy,” 8.

²¹³ Radio New Zealand, “Electrical Fault Caused St James Blaze,” *Radio New Zealand*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/regions/278309/electrical-fault-caused-st-james-blaze>; Mitchell Hageman, “Inside Auckland’s St James Theatre Restoration and Plans for 2028 Reopening,” *NZ Herald*, April 13, 2026, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/inside-aucklands-st-james-theatre-restoration-and-plans-for-2028-reopening/premium/XOUFVUKZ2ZAC5M7AWEHL3UVWQ4/>.

ins.²¹⁴ Viewed 4,500 times, the video showed damaged electrical fittings as well as fungi growing on damp floors. Swarbrick wrote an open letter calling on the government to match Auckland Council's \$15 million commitment to restoring the theatre, arguing that the decision can no longer be kicked down the road.²¹⁵

On 22 July 2023, Swarbrick said she was thrilled to announce government funding for the St James Theatre alongside Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Carmel Sepuloni, saying "We did it. With many hands, years of work and a whole lot of creative campaigning, we've secured the restoration of the St James Theatre, confirming government funding to match and unlock legacy council budget commitments."²¹⁶ While the funding decision was the Labour government's, Swarbrick thanked the thousands of people who had played a part, adding that it was "only because of this coordinated effort that today's announcement happened".²¹⁷

Where the Greens Fall Short

The Greens' built-heritage proposals are clear in direction but thin on detail. Section 5 of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy sets no amounts, timeframes or mechanism. Action 5.1.1 does not say what form national direction would take or how much "more weight" councils would have to give heritage places, with action 5.1.2 giving no funding level or eligibility. The policy does not mention HNZPT or heritage listing. It acknowledges that "neglected buildings require expensive fixes to avoid demolition", but its only related action is the funding scheme in 5.1.2. Neither the Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy nor the Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy defines "strong heritage fabric".

While relocating a house can keep it from demolition, the housing policy's encouragement of the "relocation and renovation of existing timber houses" where sites are being redeveloped (3.8.2) could also work against heritage. The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, published by ICOMOS Aotearoa New Zealand, states that relocation to clear a site for a different purpose "is not a desirable outcome and is not a conservation process", and the policy does not distinguish houses of heritage value from other timber houses.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Chlöe Swarbrick, "Save the St James: Now or Never," August 14, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/chloeNZgreens/videos/save-the-st-james-now-or-never/430104865803917/>. (4,500 views as of 15 October 2026).

²¹⁵ Radio New Zealand, "St James in Ruins: Greens' MP Reignites Calls for Historic Theatre Revival," *Radio New Zealand*, August 14, 2022, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/crime-and-justice/472834/st-james-in-ruins-greens-mp-reignites-calls-for-historic-theatre-revival>.

²¹⁶ Chlöe Swarbrick, "A New Life for St James Theatre," Press release, July 22, 2023, https://www.greens.org.nz/a_new_life_for_st_james_theatre; Radio New Zealand, "'We Did It' - \$15m Government Pledge to Help Restore Auckland's St James Theatre."

²¹⁷ Swarbrick, "A New Life for St James Theatre."

²¹⁸ Green Party, "Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy," 8; ICOMOS Aotearoa New Zealand, "ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value," *ICOMOS Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2010, https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/ICOMOS_NZ_Charter_2010_FINAL_11_Oct_2010.pdf, s 10, at 4.

The Greens' housing policy would also review and reduce Special Character Areas, the planning overlays that protect older neighbourhoods whose value lies in their buildings as a group. The policy commits to reviewing and reducing "the extent, scope and significance of 'special character areas'" (4.3.1) in order to equitably increase urban density.²¹⁹ It says the review would refocus them on "Māori heritage, natural heritage, and providing a strong heritage fabric", but does not say how areas would be chosen or what protection would remain for neighbourhoods that lose their status.²²⁰ The Character Coalition, which says it "supports increased housing supply, but not at the expense of Auckland's identity and liveability", has opposed Auckland Council's Plan Change 120, which it says would remove special character protection from about 5000 properties.²²¹

Te Pāti Māori

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Rawiri Waititi

Te Pāti Māori campaigns for tino rangatiratanga and Māori authority over decisions affecting Māori. Its 2026 Policy Manifesto applies that idea to areas from climate to housing, through whakapapa and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.²²² Its Climate chapter describes "a climate policy grounded in whakapapa, regeneration, and justice" that "centres Māori authority".²²³ The party says it stands for "the protection of our taonga tuku iho", and describes kaitiakitanga as a "responsibility of guardianship (spiritual, cultural and physical) over all things, including our taonga tuku iho and resources".²²⁴ Heritage is not a separate policy area in the manifesto, and this report found its clearest heritage-related commitments in the Climate chapter.²²⁵

Where Te Pāti Māori Supports Heritage

Te Pāti Māori's support for heritage is indirect: it would protect marae, urupā and whenua through climate funding and opposition to extraction, with the Climate chapter describing its approach as "grounded in regeneration rather than extraction".²²⁶ According to the party, climate change "directly threatens whenua, wai, moana, marae, food systems, housing security, our livelihoods, and cultural continuity".²²⁷

In March 2020, after HNZPT upgraded the Ōtuataua Stonefields at Ihumātao to a Category 1

²¹⁹ Green Party, "Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy," 9.

²²⁰ Green Party, "Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy," 9.

²²¹ Character Coalition, "Current Campaign 1," 2026, <https://charactercoalition.org.nz/maintaining-character>. The author became a youth representative of the Character Coalition after this section was written.

²²² Te Pāti Māori, "Policy - Te Pāti Māori," 2026, <https://www.maoriparty.org.nz/policy>.

²²³ Te Pāti Māori, "Policy Manifesto: Climate," *Te Pāti Māori*, June 3, 2026, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FzavJoSYNEzsVWhnS9sBMI3XENAb9-Dr/view?usp=sharing>.

²²⁴ Te Pāti Māori, "About Us - Te Pāti Māori," 2026, <https://www.maoriparty.org.nz/about-us>.

²²⁵ Keywords used in the search included: 'heritage', 'Pouhere Taonga', 'wāhi tapu', 'archaeologist' and 'historic'

²²⁶ Te Pāti Māori, "Policy Manifesto: Climate," 7.

²²⁷ Te Pāti Māori, "Policy Manifesto: Climate," 6.

historic place, then Māori Party president Che Wilson said the party would “hand the land back to mana whenua to protect and manage in the first instance, and to develop as they see fit on behalf of their people”.²²⁸

Marae and Urupā Funding

The Climate chapter would establish a \$100 million Māori Taiao relief fund “with an immediate focus on rebuilding and cleaning up marae, urupā and papakāinga impacted by environmental causes” (Action 9), resource “marae and hapū as resilience hubs” (Action 6), and create a \$1 billion Pūngao Auaha Fund to retrofit “marae, kura, papakāinga, and housing with solar energy and insulation” (Action 4).²²⁹ This fund would also invest in “marae and papakāinga energy resilience.”²³⁰ The Climate chapter acknowledges that marae, papakāinga and whenua Māori “are often located in areas most vulnerable to climate impacts”.²³¹ Maraе and urupā are among the country’s most significant places of living Māori heritage, and this report found that this is the party’s clearest commitment to looking after them.

Opposition to Extraction and the Fast-track Approvals Act

The Climate chapter commits to banning sea-bed mining (Action 1), repealing the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 and “retrospectively” revoking “all fast-tracked mining consents” (Action 2), and “ending mining on conservation land, including reserves and Significant Natural Areas” (Action 3).²³² The commitment follows the party’s opposition to the Act: before its third reading on 17 December 2024, co-leaders Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi said Te Pāti Māori had placed 16 Fast-track applicants on notice that it would “immediately revoke their consents when we form the next Government”.²³³ On its face, repealing the Act would also remove the panel route for archaeological authorities described under “Fast-track Approvals Act 2024” in the NZ First section, although both the manifesto and the 2024 statement frame the opposition around mining.

Where Te Pāti Māori Falls Short

This report found no heritage-specific policy in Te Pāti Māori’s 2026 Policy Manifesto, and no commitment that names HNZPT, wāhi tapu or archaeological sites. The \$100 million Māori Taiao relief fund covers marae and urupā only where they are “impacted by environmental causes”, so

²²⁸ Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, “Ōtuataua Stonefields,” New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero List No. 6055 (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, March 11, 2020), <https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/6055/Listing>; Te Pāti Māori, “Māori Party Welcomes New Life For Ihumātāo,” Press release, March 3, 2020, <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO2003/S00033/maori-party-welcomes-new-life-for-ihumatao.htm>.

²²⁹ Te Pāti Māori, “Policy Manifesto: Climate,” 8.

²³⁰ Te Pāti Māori, “Policy Manifesto: Energy Sovereignty,” *Te Pāti Māori*, September 20, 2026, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CPy0C0fICQ71RKuSmtaD3CNsoShG7QAc/view>, 78.

²³¹ Te Pāti Māori, “Policy Manifesto: Climate,” 7.

²³² Te Pāti Māori, “Policy Manifesto: Climate,” 8.

²³³ Daniel Perese, “Te Pāti Māori Issues Warning to Future Fast-Track Applicants,” *Te Ao Māori News*, December 17, 2024, <https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2024/12/17/te-pati-maori-issues-warning-to-future-fast-track-applicants/>.

the manifesto offers no funding for maintaining or conserving them against other threats.²³⁴ The Fast-track repeal is likewise framed around mining, and says nothing about the archaeological authorities the Act brought into the panel process or what would protect wāhi tapu once it is repealed.

Opportunity

HERITAGE SPOKESPERSON: Romeo Tevaga

The only party featured in this report not currently represented in Parliament, Opportunity describes itself as standing to “fix politics, build the next economy and restore nature.”²³⁵ With no voting record to assess, its position on heritage is drawn from published policy and statements. The closest the party comes to a heritage position is a single reference in its “Affordable Housing” policy, explained below.

Where Opportunity Supports Heritage

Opportunity’s support for heritage rests on one policy and three statements: a remark by its leader at a candidates’ debate, a submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill and a press release on its website.

At the bFM Votes candidates’ debate on 12 October, Opportunity Party leader Qiulae Wong said letting Building One at the former Carrington Hospital sit in “disrepair” was “not good” for “safe and thriving communities”, and that “we do need to make sure that developers and mana whenua who are responsible for that land do make quick decisions on it”.²³⁶ These are a leader’s remarks, not party policy, and Building One is the only specific heritage place this report found Opportunity addressing.

The policy that features heritage is “Affordable Housing”, listed under the party’s “Innovation” theme. Its September 2026 policy paper commits Opportunity to “Build on the Planning Bill with a simplified set of 10 nationally consistent zones”, which “will cut red tape that holds back the higher density development we need, while affording automatic protections for highly productive farmland, civic assets, heritage buildings and nature reserves”.²³⁷

Conservation Amendment Bill

Opportunity’s submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill states that the party does “not

²³⁴ Te Pāti Māori, “Policy Manifesto: Climate,” 8.

²³⁵ Opportunity Party, “Opportunity Party,” 2026, <https://www.opportunity.org.nz/>.

²³⁶ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 39:40; Smith, “Mt Albert Candidates Agree Derelict State of Former Psychiatric Hospital Must Be Addressed.”

²³⁷ The party’s website summarises the same commitment as “cutting red tape while still protecting farmland, heritage buildings and nature reserves.” See Opportunity Party, “Affordable Housing,” *Opportunity Party*, September 2026, <https://cdn.opportunity.org.nz/documents/policy/Opportunity%20-%20Affordable%20Housing%20Policy.pdf>, 1.

support this Bill in its current form”.²³⁸ It opposes changes it says weaken DOC’s “conservation-first mandate” and calls public conservation land “a shared national taonga held in trust for future generations”.²³⁹ It also recommends that the Bill or its National Conservation Policy Statement require an “explicit natural capital assessment (covering ecological, recreational and cultural value) alongside any economic assessment” for proposals involving disposal, exchange or significant development of conservation land.²⁴⁰

Opportunity’s press release “When the bill comes due” says the Bill “looks to make up to 60% of public conservation land available for disposal, exchange, or development”, and that New Zealand has been “blowing the budget on nature for decades”.²⁴¹ The release also says that in many cases the Bill’s changes seem aimed at small, low-value parcels, which “might be legitimate cases for DOC to dispose of the land”, but that “the public needs to be assured that land with actual ecological, heritage or cultural value is suitably protected and not disposed of”.²⁴²

Where Opportunity Falls Short

Opportunity’s heritage position is brief and thin on detail. The Affordable Housing policy names heritage buildings only once, in a list of things that would receive “automatic protections”.²⁴³

The press release lists “old quarries, village halls, access strips” among the small parcels it says might be disposed of.²⁴⁴ Neither the policy nor the press release says how heritage would be identified or what protection would involve. The Conservation Amendment Bill submission refers to heritage only as “natural heritage”.²⁴⁵ This report found built heritage addressed only in the housing policy’s single reference to “heritage buildings” and in Wong’s remarks about Building One at the bFM Votes debate.

In those remarks, Wong also raised the cost of the building, saying “I think it was about \$150 million that it was quoted, just to get it to standard in terms of earthquake strengthening...and that’s not even turning it into a school or anything else”.²⁴⁶ She did not say in those remarks whether the building should be protected or restored, and the figure was her recollection of a quote, with no source given. This report found no heritage policy from Opportunity.

²³⁸ Opportunity Party, “Submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill,” *Opportunity Party*, September 19, 2026, <https://cdn.opportunity.org.nz/documents/news-policy/Conservation%20Bill%20Submission.pdf>, 8.

²³⁹ Opportunity Party, “Submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill,” 2, 6.

²⁴⁰ Opportunity Party, “Submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill,” 6.

²⁴¹ Qiulae Wong, “When the Bill Comes Due,” Press release, June 19, 2026, https://www.opportunity.org.nz/when_the_bill_comes_due.

²⁴² Wong, “When the Bill Comes Due.”

²⁴³ Opportunity Party, “Affordable Housing,” 1.

²⁴⁴ Wong, “When the Bill Comes Due.”

²⁴⁵ Opportunity Party, “Submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill,” 2, 5.

²⁴⁶ 95bFM, “bFM Votes: Mount Albert Candidates Debate 2026,” 39:30.