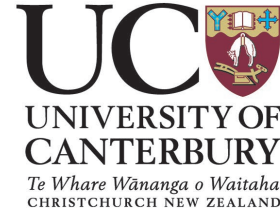


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2 September 2021

Rob van der Mark

By email: fyi-request-16360-41865654@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Rob

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 21.49 Helicopter activity over Bendigo and Upper Clutha

I refer to the Official Information Act (the Act) request dated 9 August 2021 for information relating to helicopter activity over the Bendigo and Upper Clutha region. You have requested the following:

I would like to be informed whether helicopter activity that took place on Friday 6 or Sat 7 August in the Bendigo and Upper Clutha (Albert Town/Hawea Flat) areas was undertaken by UC, any UC agent or UC (sub)contractor, or any party in collaboration with UC, or party that may collect data that UC has requested or commissioned.

Was this activity undertaken as (part of) a research program by the University of Canterbury that was fully or in part funded by Christchurch International Airport Ltd (cial), or include data that may or will be provided to cial?

I would like to be informed of the purpose and objective of this activity and what the information obtained will be used for.

Observed helicopter activity (ZK-HTV) took place for prolonged periods at low altitude over a schedule 9 regionally significant wetland which provides habitat for threatened species.

I would like to be informed if DOC permission was sought and granted for this activity prior to its commencement.

I would like to be informed if ORC, QLDC and /or CODC were informed of this activity prior to its commencement.

I also note that on 10 August 2021, in response to my acknowledgment of receipt, you noted that the query could be directed to the Spatial and Image Learning (SAIL) group, or more broadly, any department that uses Lidar technology. It has been confirmed with the SAIL group that they did not undertake this helicopter activity. The relevant group from UC was the Waterways Centre for Freshwater Management.

The helicopter was operated by Christchurch Helicopters as part of UC contribution to an MBIE funded research programme on river sediment processes. It was undertaking lidar surveys of the Upper Clutha River to map its morphology and bed characteristics.

The work was in no way connected to or funded by Christchurch International Airport and no data will be returned to them.

The aircraft was flying above notifiable limits, so permission was not sought from DOC. The flight track shows the helicopter operations to the west of the wetland in question and there was no prolonged activity over that site. The ORC (but not QLDC) was aware of the activities as were other locally significant environmental groups, including WAI Wanaka.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Claire O'Connell

Information Compliance Officer