

## For immediate release Sunday 5 March 2017

A petition seeking the protection of shorebirds and endangered dotterel nesting habitat on a public reserve was presented to Green Party MP Eugenie Sage at Point England this weekend. Almost 2000 people have signed the petition to stop a housing development that will significantly impact threatened and endangered birds.



The petition comes after Prime Minister, Bill English, blamed “nature lovers” for the housing crisis at the Blue Greens conference last weekend. The Prime Minister accused planning rules, whose purpose is to promote the sustainable management of resources, of putting pressure on low and middle income families and causing poverty.

Environment Minister Nick Smith said the Point England development was being “*held up*” because of an argument that there will be adverse impacts on birds. However, the development is in fact being fast tracked by by-passing normal Reserves Act and Resource Management Act processes in an attempt to cut Auckland Council and the local community out of having a say. While the *Regulatory Impact Statement for the Point England Development Enabling Bill* says the Government has been working on the development since September 2015, work on a plan to mitigate the impacts on the birds only began in January this year.



*A Northern New Zealand Dotterel at Point England*

Shaun Lee who runs the Point England Bird Sanctuary says he just wants the proper process to be followed. His petition seeks that *“an environmental impact assessment be completed and presented to the Local Government and Environment Committee with a better development proposal”*.

At the Select Committee hearing Mr Lee said that *“although the reserve was eligible for protection under the Ramsar convention there was no mention of wildlife in the bill and that it was very poorly researched.”*

Mr Lee says *“It might be possible to have some houses and better habitat for the birds at Point England, however it’s going to take time and money to do it properly. The Government’s slow response to the housing crisis shows we need more planning, not less. It’s disingenuous to claim that the housing crisis is a result of misguided views about protection of the environment.”*

Forest & Bird’s submission says they are *“concerned that the proposed housing development set out in the Bill will set a precedent for the fast tracking of developments on what is currently designated Public Open Space with significant natural values, without proper consultation or environmental assessment.”*

People who signed the petition said they liked living with nature.

*“Point England is an important conservation site, especially for shorebirds, and a wonderful haven in the city.”*

– Rachel F

*“We need more houses in Auckland but destroying green space is not the way”*

– Carolyn S

*“Auckland needs these green space sanctuaries for birds as well as humans to enjoy”*

– Lorna L