

Kāpiti U.S. Marines Trust



US MARINES

IN NEW ZEALAND 1942 - 1944

Annual Report : January 1 – December 31, 2025

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Major Larry M. Keim, USMC (Ret)

Chair, Kāpiti U.S. Marines Trust

Leadership Transition and Continuity

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Kāpiti U.S. Marines Trust for the year ended 31 December 2025, my first year as Chair of the Trust.

This year marked an important transition in leadership. After seven years as Chair, Richard Bengé stepped down, leaving the Trust in a strong and mature position. Richard's contribution has been substantial. Under his leadership the Trust strengthened its governance, upgraded its website into an online history portal, secured and restored the World War II Norm Hatch Collection, completed the Camp Paekākāriki Memorial, and laid the foundations for a new, integrated U.S. Marines heritage trail across all three former camp sites. On behalf of the Trustees, I thank Richard warmly for his dedication and leadership. We are pleased that he will continue to support the Trust as a Life Member and as a voluntary consultant.

Fundraising and Strategic Partnerships

During 2025, the Trust continued to build momentum and credibility, particularly in fundraising and partnership development. Through our membership of the Chapel & York US Foundation, we received four grants during the year totalling **NZ\$11,654.47**, enabling U.S.-based donors to support our work while receiving tax benefits in the United States. Membership of the Foundation was renewed in November 2025. Thanks to our Patrons, former U.S. Ambassador, Bill McCormack and his wife Gail for their support and generosity.

Significant public funding was also secured in New Zealand. In October 2025, the Trust was awarded **NZ\$40,250** from the **Lotteries Grants Board** for the U.S. Marines Trail Heritage Project. The Trustees resolved to allocate this funding to **Stage 1 of the U.S. Marines Memorial Upgrade**, supporting the repair, repainting, and upgrading of existing signage and associated heritage infrastructure at Queen Elizabeth Park.

Additional support was received from the **Kāpiti Coast District Council Museum and Heritage Development Fund**, which granted **NZ\$8,625** to implement a social media strategy to promote the work of the Trust. A further **NZ\$2,500** contribution to this project has been confirmed for July 2026. The **Raumati Community Board** also provided **NZ\$5,750** to design and produce three new heritage signs linking Raumati South to the Marines World War II history to Queen Elizabeth Park, along with an earlier contribution of **NZ\$862.50** towards Memorial Day commemorations.

Major Projects and Strategic Direction

A major highlight of the year was the completion of a professionally designed and fully costed plan for a **U.S. Marines Heritage Trail Network**, with an estimated total value of approximately **NZ\$300,000**. Thanks to Trail Designer Janice Hill for her enthusiasm and professional inspiration. The plan connects the three former camps at Paekākāriki, Whareroa Farm (Camp Mackay), and Queen Elizabeth Park (Camp Russell) through accessible walking and cycling trails that integrate physical signage with digital storytelling.

The Trust formally adopted the trail plan in 2025, with **Stage 1 confirmed for implementation in 2026**, subject to final approvals from the Greater Wellington Regional Council and funding for subsequent stages. This project represents a step change in the Trust's capacity to deliver large-scale heritage infrastructure and to engage local, national, and international audiences.

Governance and Organisational Maturity

Recognising the Trust's growth and increasing responsibilities, a comprehensive review of the Trust Deed was undertaken with our lawyer, Tracey Pervan during the year. This work reflects the organisation's maturity, its engagement in international fundraising, and the need to formalise arrangements with stakeholders who own and manage some of the Trust's-developed assets and who are guardians of the park land we operate on.

At year end, the updated Trust Deed was awaiting final approval from the Charities Commission.

Events, Community Engagement, and Public Profile

Public events remained central to the Trust's work and community engagement. Memorial Day commemorations marked the **83rd anniversary** of the arrival of U.S. Marines in the district, while ANZAC Day was again supported by the visit of the **United States Marine Corps Forces Pacific Band** for the third consecutive year.

These events continue to reinforce the enduring bonds formed during the Second World War and bring this shared history to life for new audiences across the Kāpiti Coast and beyond.

Acknowledgements and Looking Ahead

Thanks to our funders, partners, stakeholders, volunteers, and supporters for their continued commitment to the Trust.

I also thank my fellow Trustees for their dedication during a year of transition and progress. The current Trust is working extremely well and benefitting from new members, particularly Steve La Hood who is leading our creative team, Nick Miller who is adding a valuable contribution to our fund-raising activity and Sheila Ellen Taylor who has helped in fostering our US-NZ relationship.

The Trust enters 2026 with clear direction, strong foundations, and an ambitious but achievable programme of work ahead. With confirmed funding in place and growing support both locally and

internationally, we are well positioned to deliver the next stage of our heritage programme to ensure the story of the U.S. Marines in Kāpiti remains visible, accessible, and meaningful for generations to come. Fund-raising and building our volunteer team remain centre-stage as our big challenges.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Larry M. Keim". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" being more prominent than the last name "Keim".

Major Larry M. Keim, USMC (Ret)

Chair, Kāpiti U.S. Marines Trust