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**Sent:** Friday, May 21, 2021 6:19 PM  
**To:** haveyoursay  
**Subject:** The Form 'Submission Form - Waitomo District Council draft 10YP 2021-2031 Consultation' was submitted

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# Website Form

## Form Results

**Full Name**

Jason Dawson

**Organisation**

C/- Hamilton Airport

**Phone**

078430056

**Address**

C/- Hamilton Airport Airport Road RD2

**Postcode**

3282

**Email**

jason@waikatonz.com

**Requirements**

**I wish to speak to Council about my submission**

Yes

**Proposal**

**Option1**

False

**Option 2**

False

**My comment on this proposal**

**What do you think about our plans for our projects and activities?**

**What do you think about our plans for finances and rates?**

**Any other comments?**

Please find attached our submission from Hamilton & Waikato  
Tourism

# **Hamilton & Waikato** TOURISM

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## **Submission to Waitomo District Council Long Term Plan 2021-31**

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### **Introduction**

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism (HWT) is the region's Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) whose role is to generate competitive economic benefit through visitor sector strategies focused on increasing visitor length of stay and spend.

**Our core purpose is aligned to our Statement of Intent:**

- ↳ To promote the Waikato region as an appealing destination to international and domestic visitors in order to deliver economic benefits to the region's communities.
- ↳ To grow visitor nights and expenditure
- ↳ To grow the number of business events and market share of delegate days
- ↳ To support the tourism industry to develop and deliver quality visitor experiences.
- ↳ To maintain and strengthen support for the visitor sector through partnerships with local government, the visitor industry and the wider community.

### **Strategic vision**

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism is a subsidiary company under the Council Controlled Organization (CCO) of Waikato Regional Airport Limited. It has a commercial board with Annabel Cotton as its Chair.

Our strategic group vision is:

**We connect the Mighty Waikato to New Zealand**

**We are locally supported, regionally significant, nationally connected.**

### **COVID-19 impact**

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in world-wide crises: from health to social and economic devastation. The impact on HWT was significant. With New Zealanders unable to travel and international borders closed, the tourism industry suffered severe disruption. HWT's financial forecasts and performance targets have been reviewed and restated to reflect:

- Continued growth of domestic tourism with visitor numbers steadily building through FY22;

- A reshaped and smaller meetings and conventions market, with event attendees sourced from New Zealand and Australia;
- A slow restart to the international long-haul visitor market once the border reopens;
- Implementation of year two of the \$3.75m Regional Events Fund for Waikato, Rotorua, Ruapehu and Taupo; and
- Delivery of the remaining Ministry for Business, Innovation & Employment STAPP (Strategic Tourism Asset Protection Programme) funded projects across the region.

## Rebuilding the Waikato visitor economy

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism has been instrumental in leading the response, restart and rebuilding of the regional tourism and events sector. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were swift and severe for the entire visitor economy which includes tourism businesses, activities and attractions, accommodation providers, retail and hospitality, transport operators, conferences and business events, major events and venues, education institutions, plus the many suppliers who partner with the sector.

From March 2020, we began working to a Restart, Rebuild & Reshape Strategy for the Mighty Waikato which is summarized below:



*\*PLEASE NOTE: These timeframes and activities will adjust based on national guidelines and alert levels.*

There are several key initiatives underway to support the rebuild and reimagining of Waikato’s tourism sector.

### Strategic Tourism Assets Protection Programme (STAPP)

The \$230m Strategic Tourism Assets Protection Programme (STAPP) was announced in the Government’s budget in May 2020 to protect the assets in the tourism landscape that form the core of our essential tourism offerings to ensure their survival through the disruption caused by COVID-19.

Grants and loans were allocated to tourism businesses, Inbound Tour Operators and Regional Tourism Organisations.

## TOURISM BUSINESSES

130 tourism businesses received a total of \$261m in support comprised of a mix of grants and loans.

## REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism successfully applied for a maximum of \$700,000 to address the significant shortfall in industry investment. The criteria for applying for the grant was to retain existing local government investment.

The funding can only be used for:

- Domestic marketing which complements Tourism New Zealand's national campaign;
- Implementing a domestic management approach (moving our Tourism Opportunities Plan and Visitor Strategy into a Destination Management Plan framework); and
- Advance the goals of the NZ-Aotearoa Government Tourism Strategy around sustainability and growth.

There is a possibility of an extension of Government support for the 2021-2022 financial year for regional tourism organisations. However, this will only be available if existing local government funding levels is maintained at FY21 commitments.

Out of the 27 programmes of work we are looking to undertake under the three tagged areas listed above, 11 are collaboration projects with other regions which border the Waikato.

Specific STAPP projects we planned to deliver for Waitomo District in FY22 include:

- Development of an Ambassador programme for the district in conjunction with Otorohanga District (branded 'The King Country Ambassador Programme'): [www.nzambassador.com](http://www.nzambassador.com)
- Development of the West Coast Touring Route journey between Waikato, King Country and Taranaki regions
- Review and refresh of touring routes, particularly SH4 to Taumaranui (collaboration project with Visit Ruapehu and Destination Rotorua)
- Co-curate and development of food tourism experiences, including itineraries, marketing initiatives and product development (collaboration project with Destination Rotorua)
- Participation in the national and Central North Island domestic marketing campaigns driving visitation into the district.
- Regional tourism marketing advisory services for tourism businesses
- Rollout of stage two of the regenerative tourism leadership programme to enhance sustainability initiatives for tourism operators.

All other projects from participation with Tourism New Zealand's national domestic marketing campaign, partnerships with AA Traveller and the NZ Motor Caravan Association through to procurement of visitor travel data, will benefit the district and wider region as well.

## Regional Events Fund – Thermal Explorer Highway

The four regions of the Thermal Explorer Highway collective including Waikato, Rotorua, Taupo and Ruapehu were approved \$3.75 million for regional events by Tourism Minister Stuart Nash on 18 December 2020.

The Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) from Waikato, Rotorua, Taupo and Ruapehu, alongside their council partners, worked together on developing a collaborative regional events investment plan for the next 2-3 years to drive additional domestic visitation into their regions.

This was the first investment from the \$50 million Regional Events Fund to stimulate domestic tourism and travel between regions through holding events. The fund is intended to support the tourism and events sector, while replacing some of the spend from international tourists as a result of COVID-19.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism were selected as the Lead Entity for the Regional Events Fund across the four regions. We see the collaboration between Waikato, Rotorua, Taupō and Ruapehu will lead to a strong and compelling event proposition for our four regions, who also partnered together for the Domestic Events Fund.

The bulk of the \$3.75 million fund will be used to create a contestable fund with successful events being supported over a three-year period. The focus will be on the development of iconic or anchor events, with a mix of new and expansion of existing events. Another portion of the funding will be used to run capability building workshops and training for event organisers and suppliers, plus develop or update existing regional event strategies; with the remainder to cover administration, legal and event measurement.

## Our current funding FY21

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism is funded through a public/private partnership with the region's seven local authorities and the tourism industry. This is reviewed every three years with councils as part of their Long Term Plan reviews.

Under the current 2018-2021 Service Level Agreement, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism receive \$1,215,000 + CPI from local government which will be leveraged with another \$500,000 of investment from tourism operators and other stakeholders. An overview of our current local government partners and their funding contributions are detailed below:

- ↘ Hamilton City Council - \$585,000 + CPI per annum
- ↘ Matamata-Piako District Council - \$150,000 per annum
- ↘ Otorohanga District Council - \$60,000 + CPI per annum
- ↘ South Waikato District Council - \$60,000 per annum
- ↘ Waikato District Council - \$150,000 per annum
- ↘ Waipa District Council - \$150,000 + CPI per annum
- ↘ Waitomo District Council - \$60,000 + CPI per annum

## Our 2021-2022 performance targets

Given the restart journey for the visitor economy post-COVID, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism (HWT) have seven revised performance targets confirmed as part of our Statement of Intent 2021-2022 and beyond.

Measure	Data source	Frequency
 <b>VISITOR NIGHTS</b> Hold total visitor nights compared to the previous year (restore)	Accommodation Data Programme (MBIE)	Monthly / annually
 <b>VISITOR SPEND</b> 5% growth in visitor spend across the region compared to the previous year (restore)	Tourism Electronic Card Transactions (TECT)	Monthly / annually
 <b>CONVENTIONS &amp; BUSINESS EVENTS</b> Rebuild and restore market share of total business events to 5%	Business Events Data Programme (BEDP)	Quarterly / annually
 <b>DELIVER STAPP PROJECTS</b> 20 projects successfully delivered by December 2021	MBIE report	Annually
 <b>INDUSTRY INVESTMENT &amp; GRANTS</b> \$100,000 of industry contributions towards marketing activities	Hamilton & Waikato Tourism	Annually
 <b>MEDIA &amp; TRAVEL TRADE ACTIVITY</b> 10 media outlets hosted & 150 travel trade trained or hosted	Hamilton & Waikato Tourism	Annually
 <b>\$3.75M REGIONAL EVENTS FUND</b> Two industry capability workshops & first round of funding distributed for Waikato, Rotorua, Ruapehu & Taupo	Hamilton & Waikato Tourism (Lead Entity)	Annually

## Key activities – what we do

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism are a full-service Regional Tourism Organisation who do more than marketing. Our strategic priorities and annual activities are delivered through the following work areas:

Destination Marketing	Destination Management	Business Events	Major Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ International Marketing</li> <li>▪ Domestic Marketing</li> <li>▪ Digital Marketing</li> <li>▪ Major event marketing</li> <li>▪ PR/Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Industry &amp; product development</li> <li>▪ Stakeholder relationships</li> <li>▪ Data, research &amp; insight</li> <li>▪ Govt &amp; Local Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Convention Bureau marketing</li> <li>▪ Conference bids</li> <li>▪ CAP support</li> <li>▪ Industry development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stakeholder coordination</li> <li>▪ Major event bid &amp; prospecting</li> <li>▪ Event measurement</li> <li>▪ Regional Events Fund</li> </ul>

## Target markets

Our aim is to improve awareness, change perceptions and build demand in target markets focused on overnight stays for Waitomo District.

The majority of our partnership funds are invested into the domestic market through domestic campaign activity and the business events sector. International marketing is undertaken in partnership with Tourism New Zealand and the Explore Central North Island regions of Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, Rotorua, Ruapehu, Taupo, Tairāwhiti Gisborne & Hawke's Bay. The focus is primarily on tourism trade and media.

### 1. New Zealand

Target Markets: Drive markets of Auckland, Bay of Plenty (Tauranga and Rotorua), Taupo, Taranaki and Manawatu plus fly markets of Wellington and Christchurch. Local Waikato residents are also a key market.

### 2. International Markets

Target Markets: Primary - Australia, UK/Europe, USA, China. Secondary - India, Japan, South East Asia

Further detail is provided below around the activities Hamilton & Waikato Tourism deliver.

## DESTINATION MARKETING

### International marketing

Our international marketing activity is primarily undertaken in partnership with Tourism New Zealand and the collective of central North Island regions/RTOs known as Explore Central North Island (ECNI) including Bay of Plenty, Coromandel, Rotorua, Ruapehu, Taupo,

Tairāwhiti Gisborne & Hawke's Bay. This collaboration enables the region to leverage financial and people resources to greater effect in these highly competitive markets.

HWT is responsible for supporting Tourism New Zealand's tourism trade, media and business events activity in our region. Although long-haul international travel restrictions are due to remain in place for the foreseeable future, it's important to maintain visibility as a destination, and continue to inspire future visitation.

1. Australian campaign – *now Trans-Tasman travel resumed from April 2021*
2. International trade famils and training – *delivered virtually until borders reopen*
3. International media famils and hosting – *delivered virtually until borders reopen*

## **Domestic marketing**

What people know and how they feel about the region has a significant influence on their intention to visit. Building awareness, changing perceptions, and providing 'reasons to visit' is a key focus of Hamilton & Waikato Tourism. Engaging Waikato residents and developing stronger marketing strategies are two key strategic priorities aimed at improving our reputation. The domestic travel market will be key to lead the social and economic recovery of the visitor sector post-COVID.

Tactical strategies will include:

1. Upweighting our "Mighty Locals" campaign to include deals and packages, plus inspire intra-regional travel.
2. External campaigns based on the region's core strengths such as walking, cycling, nature-based experiences, including support and leveraging of key events and high-performance sport (eg. ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2022, FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, Waitomo Trail Run, etc).
3. Refreshed domestic campaign branded 'Open for Exploration' in our key 'drive and fly' markets utilising the recently completed domestic perception research to enable a more targeted and effective approach.
4. Partner with Tourism New Zealand on the 'Do Something New, New Zealand' national marketing campaign through content, storytelling, advertising and activations
5. Partner with Air New Zealand, AA Traveller and the Central North Island Collective (Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Taupo, Ruapehu, Tairāwhiti Gisborne) on sub-regional domestic campaigns and consumer event activations
6. Create media and PR opportunities to ensure Waitomo visitor destination content, stories and our people/tourism operators are profiled and promoted across all media channels.

## **Business Events Waikato**

The Business Events sector (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions – MICE) is a key element of Hamilton & Waikato Tourism's business strategy.

Business delegates are high spending visitors with an estimated expenditure averaging \$299 per night for international delegates and \$461 per night for domestic delegates (MBIE Convention Activity Survey). This is significantly higher than both international and

domestic leisure visitors. The region is the fourth largest business events destination in the country, behind Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

The benefits of business events flow well beyond the conference or meeting and include pre- and post-activities, off-site events (team building/dinners), transport, accommodation, food and beverage, technical support, etc. Business events are also effective in bringing people to a region in the first instance and contribute to our objective of improving perceptions, generating positive word of mouth and repeat visitation. They are a key 'seed' market for the Waikato.

Business events also bring people together to exchange knowledge and ideas, build relationships and in the longer term enhance investment and talent flows, all critical drivers of economic growth and prosperity for the Waikato and Waitomo District.

We see business events as leading the social and economic recovery of our visitor economy.

Key activities will include:

1. Delivering a "Mighty Welcome" campaign to promote the restart of our business events sector, including messages of safety and hygiene standards post-COVID.
2. Collaborate with Tourism New Zealand to rebuild the 2-3 year pipeline of international conferences to Waikato
3. Develop relationships with key business sectors to leverage value.
4. Deliver an annual 'Business Events Showcase' for Waikato
5. Co-ordinate domestic buyer famils, media famils and hosting
6. Attend and promote region at key trade shows.

## **Digital marketing**

Digital channels are widely used to research, plan and book travel. Digital marketing allows targeted messages to be delivered to specific market segments at a much lower cost than traditional mediums.

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism manages a range of digital platforms. WaikatoNZ.com is the primary portal for Waikato enquiries and "call to action" for our marketing and promotional activities, supported by social media and newzealand.com which is now a key domestic-facing channel as well.

Key activities will include:

1. Provide relevant and engaging content on WaikatoNZ.com and social media.
2. Ensure all digital content is optimised for mobile, desktop & key visitor languages.
3. Provide comprehensive digital content on tourism operators, attractions, events, the seven districts and key sectors (eg. cycling, food tourism, sports tourism, etc)
4. Support the digital capability of Waitomo tourism operators via Google My Business and other key digital marketing platforms.

## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

### Industry and product development

Our region's long-term success as a destination depends on its ability to achieve critical mass of high-quality visitor infrastructure, and compelling experiences and products. This will be achieved through the expansion of new experiences that leverage our region's competitive advantages especially with a domestic focus in a post-COVID world.

A key focus for 2021-24 is implementing the Destination Management Plan approach to support future opportunities for development across the region. The Destination Management Plan will guide development work and our priority projects over the next three to five years, including the expansion and enhancement of existing visitor experiences in Waitomo District which also align with the tribal aspirations of Maniapoto.

Destination management brings together different stakeholders to achieve the common goal of developing a well-managed, sustainable visitor destination. It is an ongoing process that requires destinations to plan for the future and considers the social, economic, cultural and environmental risks and opportunities.

Adopting a destination management approach enables communities and destinations to respond to changing conditions and determine the type of tourism they would like to have and the benefits they would like to receive, taking an active role in managing these.

Destination management requires a holistic and integrated approach with three interdependent components:

1. **Visitor Experience:** Waitomo's experience offering, including activities, attractions, supporting infrastructure, services and amenities.
2. **Marketing and Promotion:** the destination's marketing and promotional activity, creating demand and enabling the destination to be competitive, productive and sustainable.
3. **Resource Management:** the region's strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, co-governance arrangements, organisational structures and the investments that support the destination.

Other key activities within industry and product development include:

1. Co-funding research and feasibility studies
2. Facilitate product development within current and emerging sectors such as agri-tourism, sports tourism, food tourism, etc.
3. Partner with Venture Taranaki, Rotorua and Ruapehu on the review and development of drive tourism routes
4. Development and roll-out of the Ambassador programme across the five other districts of Waikato RTO region, including a new King Country Ambassador programme with Otorohanga and Waitomo Districts
5. Support the aspirations and actions of the New Zealand Tourism Sustainability Commitment and the Tiaki Promise across the industry

## Stakeholder management

Local government and central government agencies (eg. Department of Conservation) have a critical role to play in the growth and development of the visitor sector. Our region's local government partners collectively have significant influence over many of the environments that visitors spend time in (demand side perspective), and also develop and enforce the planning and regulatory frameworks that tourism operators must comply with (supply side perspective). Public sector support is therefore a critical success factor for the growth and development of the tourism industry in the region.

The region's city and six districts have supported Hamilton & Waikato Tourism since its inception in 2011 and provided additional funding to enable the organisation to increase its current activities, as well as expand its scope into product development. It is through this collaborative approach that Hamilton & Waikato Tourism can generate investment from tourism operators to further leverage local government's investment with a strong and successful public/private partnership.

We will continue to manage key stakeholder relationships and provide broader support to the visitor sector through the following key activities:

1. Organise or attend business and tourism cluster groups.
2. Regular dissemination of relevant information and research
3. Facilitate opportunities for operator networking and development, including two annual Industry Symposiums and free development workshops.
4. Develop a Regenerative Tourism leadership programme for our operators, in conjunction with our Central North Island RTOs of Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Taupo, Ruapehu and Tairāwhiti Gisborne
5. Support for external and Government funding for tourism infrastructure and product development
6. Partner with NZTE and Te Waka on attracting international and domestic investment opportunities for the tourism industry.
7. Provide sector leadership and advocacy for Waikato's visitor economy.
8. Work collaboratively and provide a 'visitor lense' to local and central government planning processes.
9. Support local government applications to the Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TiF)

## Long Term Plan 2021-24 funding

Hamilton & Waikato Tourism wish to maintain existing funding levels for the next three financial years with our seven local government partners, including Waitomo District Council at an annual investment of \$60,000 per annum.

The Return on Investment (RoI) in Hamilton & Waikato Tourism has been significant for Waitomo District Council. This figure is calculated on every \$1 of council funding invested in Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, and the return to the district economy through visitor expenditure – domestic and international.

## Submission No. 058

Prior to COVID-19 border closures, the return on investment with every \$1 of council funding invested in Hamilton & Waikato Tourism generated a return of \$1,067 in visitor spend into Waitomo District (*source: Monthly Regional Tourism Estimates*).

By continuing to fund Hamilton & Waikato Tourism would ensure the economic viability of the district's tourism offering, continued access to domestic and international markets, sustainable employment opportunities and maintaining a demand pipeline across the visitor economy.

As we work hard together to navigate and reshape the tourism sector post-COVID, it's more important than ever that we continue the momentum of support to help Waitomo District and its visitor economy transitions from 'survive' to 'thrive' mode.

We look forward to speaking to our submission during the hearing process.

Ngaa mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JD', written over a thin horizontal line.

**Jason Dawson**  
Chief Executive  
Hamilton & Waikato Tourism  
May 2021