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Sent: Monday, 13 May 2024 12:59 pm
To: haveyoursay
Subject: LTP - Discover Waitomo - Hamilton Waikato Tourism Funding
Attachments: LTP WDC 2024 Submission Discover Waitomo.pdf

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Hi there,

Please find attached a letter in relation to the proposed Hamilton Waikato Tourism funding reduction

Happy to attend an in person meeting if given the opportunity

Ngā mihi,

Dan

Daniel Thorne

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Kia ora

We are writing in relation to the proposed funding reduction contained in the Waitomo District Councils Long Term Plan 24/34 (LTP). It is our understanding there is a proposed reduction of up to 60% is currently being proposed.

I write this letter to oppose these reductions as the representative of Discover Waitomo (*thi*) operator of The Waitomo Glowworm Cave, Ruakuri Cave, Black Water Rafting Co., Aranui Cave, The Homestead Cabins & The Homestead Café/Restaurant – we collectively employ over 180 in the region and contribute via rates and utilities provided to those in the Waitomo Village

We recognise the pressure local government is under and the difficult decisions councils have the responsibility of making during these increasingly uncertain economic times – but thought we'd put a few words together to share our unique perspective on the funding outcomes for the district

We acknowledge the unique funding structure whereby 6 councils collaboratively fund Hamilton & Waikato Tourism – whilst on the surface getting cut through/share of voice across multiple regions can be complex – we firmly believe a strong Hamilton/Waikato presence on both the national and international stage will lead to a more prosperous Waitomo district. An International Market example of this was the advocating for games during the FIFA world cup & the strategic positioning of the USA games between WLG & AKL which we observed drove record self drive USA visitation to the Waitomo Valley for June.

Waitomo district losing RTO representation may exclude the region from central government initiatives/funding such as the Regional Events Fund (REF) which the RTOs across the country were responsible for administrating. Its also not clear how the loss of the RTO would impact the connection to Tourism New Zealand leading to potential exclusion in Global campaigns.

This investment by WDC will generate increased council revenues via economic activity and creation of local jobs which are critical during times where further economic headwinds are anticipated. The increasingly buoyant tourism industry should be a beacon for those looking to move to or start a business in region.

There is an incredibly competitive market for both International & Domestic travelers – I have no doubt the HWT team will provide you with a number of case studies outlining the impact of tourism funding reductions.

As an ASX/NZX listed operator we are fortunate to have global support marketing & sales teams who work around the clock to actively promote Waitomo as a world class destination. With support from HWT Waitomo district stands to benefit from further leveraging their strategic geographic position and attracting more high value international & domestic visitors into the region.

We encourage you to reflect again on the proposed reductions to Hamilton Waikato Tourism & the role you wish tourism to play in our vibrant & prosperous region over the next 10 years

Many Thanks



Daniel Thorne

Discover Waitomo Group General Manager

