

Aotea Great Barrier Local Board feedback on the draft Aotearoa New Zealand Government Tourism Strategy

Introduction

Aotea Great Barrier Island like many parts of New Zealand is heavily reliant on the visitor industry. The community is generally supportive of tourism and consider visitors as good for the local economy but there is a clear sense that locals and visitors alike do not wish to see untrammelled growth of the industry.

The island's tourism industry also faces some of the issues addressed in the draft Tourism Strategy being highly seasonal with a limited capacity for travel with limited flights and ferry sailings. Our industry data is incomplete due to technology black spots and no arrivals data for private boats, helicopters and planes. This makes it difficult for the island's local businesses to strategize.

Therefore, the local board worked with the community to develop a visitor strategy to strengthen local ownership of the visitor industry, create opportunities for youth, and to provide much needed collaborative support for tourism coordination.

[Aotea / Great Barrier Island Visitor Strategy 2018-2023](#) aligns to the draft Tourism strategy around strengthening key stakeholder collaboration, a focus for value over volume tourism and better data gathering. It has five core areas designed to improve both the visitor and community experience of tourism.

1. *Governance* focuses on giving residents and businesses a voice in tourism planning and strengthens community engagement with tourism.
2. *Shaping demand: Information and image* engages locals in storytelling and provides the visitor with a better idea of things to do based on local knowledge.
3. *Experience development* focuses enhancing the visitor experience by visitors, businesses and community working together.
4. *Infrastructure* with a focus on transportation and the provision of key services.
5. *Insight* emphasises the need to generate data and information that can inform future planning

Our strategy's vision statement states: As proud residents of Aotea / Great Barrier Island we will work together to develop tourism in a way that strengthens and empowers our communities, enhances the quality of life of our people, stimulates our economy, and protects our environmental and cultural taonga. We will extend a warm welcome to respectful visitors and ensure we deliver a unique tourism experience in a way that celebrates our local distinctiveness.

Consultation question feedback

What do you think about the government's proposal to take a more active and deliberate role in the tourism system?

The board supports the draft strategy's approach to deliver on its overall goal of enriching New Zealand through environmental, social and economically sustainable tourism growth.

We are supportive of central government's essential stewardship role and advocate for increased collaboration between local and central governments, private sector and local

communities. We believe it's crucial that any locally created visitor strategies feed into a national plan.

Central government should not be telling communities what is good for them when it comes to tourism. Communities should be able to develop their own local strategies whilst being able to go to central government for assistance to develop/implement those strategies.

What are the areas you think should be a particular focus? Are there areas where the government's role should be limited?

Biosecurity is a key concern as we strive to protect our ecology from pests. We are currently part of the Treasure Island programme but border security is a struggle to manage with our airports and wharves, both at the island and mainland destinations. There is also the consideration of private planes, helicopters and boats that may not land at the key entry points.

Climate Change is of concern for our island with its predicted impacts on our key coastal infrastructure and we support this being a focus in the strategy.

The draft strategy proposes five tourism outcomes for government. Do you support these outcomes and are these the right outcomes to focus on?

1. New Zealand benefits from more productive tourism growth

We support the focus for 'value over volume' as a strategy for tourism growth with the emphasis being on visitor experience rather than visitor numbers. Our visitor strategy focuses on shaping and enhancing the visitor experience with the expectation a visitor will stay longer or make repeat visits. The overall experience being better for the community and better for the visitors.

2. Exceptional visitor experiences ensure the sector's future success

The board supports this outcome as it aligns to the Aotea/Great Barrier Island Visitor Strategy 2018-2023. It is essential to ensure that experiences developed and promoted are in line with community aspirations and any data gathered is shared according to privacy guidelines.

3. Tourism protects, enhances and promotes New Zealand's natural, cultural and historic heritage

The board has recently completed a heritage survey and feel it's important to protect and care for our natural, cultural and historic heritage for the local community, national and international visitors.

4. New Zealanders' lives are improved by tourism

The board supports this outcome for education, job creation and increasing the current wage levels but it's essential that any planning is developed in line with community aspirations.

5. Regions and communities benefit from tourism

Supporting local community led tourism plans and projects is extremely important. Sustainable development 'for and by' the island community underpins the Aotea / Great Barrier Island Visitor Strategy 2018-2023.

The strategy identifies an ambitious work programme for government, what are the highest priority actions from your perspective?

Actions that develop tourism in a way that strengthens and empowers our communities, enhances the quality of life of our people, stimulates our economy, and protects our environmental and cultural taonga.

What are the areas in this draft strategy that you think could be strengthened?

Aotea Great Barrier is an island in the Hauraki Gulf. Protection of our harbour is of utmost importance to us; environmentally, socially and economically. We would ask that central government support Seachange Tai Timu Tai Pari and biosecurity projects that protect our harbours from marine pests and pollution such as coastal dumping.

We are extremely reliant on our airfields, wharves and harbours for transportation of people and freight. As noted in our visitor strategy the island's key entry points (wharves and airfields) play an important role in tourism and will require a collaborative effort between iwi, key stakeholders and community to make these areas both operationally efficient and reflective of place. We would like to see recognition of the role local airports play in enabling local tourism as key infrastructure.

While developing any tourist destination it is imperative that the environment around that attraction is not spoilt to the extent that what first attracted the visitor is lost. Selection of what infrastructure is required also needs careful balancing and selection should always be made in collaboration with iwi, key stakeholders and community.

We'd also like to emphasize the importance of focusing on providing accurate visitor information as equal to the gathering of visitor data. Some destinations are just not the right place for everyone and unless "truthful marketing" is done there can be awful repercussions not only for communities but also the visitors. Education and information need to be readily available about destinations and people should be encouraged to check things out before they embark on their adventures especially when coming to Aotea Great Barrier Island.

Tourism needs to work in balance with the local communities. There needs to be a reciprocity to the relationship otherwise it becomes detrimental to the community wellbeing. Our island's tourism numbers were peaking dramatically in the high season and the community were feeling overrun. It was essential for sustainable tourism that the community was actively involved in creating the visitor strategy, that the tourism coordinator who manages the strategy actively engages with the community about its progress and that biannually the community's attitudes are surveyed to ensure we are on the right path. We strongly advocate for community wellbeing being a top priority for the draft tourism strategy.