

Seeking stronger ties with local government

Tim Cossar, Chief Executive, Tourism Industry Association

The tourism industry is putting a stake in the ground today with the launch of *Local Government and the Visitor Industry: A Powerful Partnership*.

Produced by TIA and Regional Tourism Organisations of New Zealand, this document is inviting local government to enter into a much closer relationship with tourism businesses in order to ramp up the economic contribution visitors make to communities throughout New Zealand.

A Powerful Partnership is being formally launched in Auckland today and will also be sent to every candidate contesting the 2010 elections and key council employees. We want to give them a better understanding of the importance of the visitor industry to the regions. It will also highlight the industry's commitment to work more closely with local government to maximise the benefits an active and positive partnership will deliver.

The visitor industry generates \$59 million daily in communities throughout New Zealand. That increases significantly when we count the indirect visitor spend in places like petrol stations, supermarkets, shops, cafes and bars. *A Powerful Partnership's* message is that there is the potential for visitors to contribute much more to New Zealand communities if we can build a strong tourism/local government partnership.

Councils are arguably tourism's most important partner. They play a huge role in determining the level and quality of visitor services and infrastructure available, the events that take place and the public money that is invested in destination promotion. This activity helps attract visitors, influences how long they stay, how much they spend and whether they recommend the region to others.

Priorities for Action

A Powerful Partnership lists five priorities for action between local government and tourism:

- **Engagement**

Central government recognised the importance of the visitor industry, we're now seeking a closer working relationship with councils, underpinned by a shared appreciation of the industry's value and the opportunities it presents for regional economic growth.

- **Investment**

We seek to partner with councils on investment decisions that will maximise community benefits and enhance the quality of the visitor experience.

- **Environment**

We seek to work more closely with councils to enhance environmental management in the regions and deliver on the environmental promise that is so important for visitors and other industries

- **Regional Profile**

We endorse council investment in regional promotion and want to engage in joint initiatives that will maximize the return from promotional efforts.

- **Regulatory Environment**

We seek to partner with councils to ease the compliance burden on businesses of all types and sizes and to foster a business-friendly regulatory environment for high quality operators.

The visitor experience to a region is the sum total of how business, local and central government and communities welcome and understand visitor needs and improve the visitor experience. If local authorities can play a lead role in facilitating that, then communities will reap the benefits that visitors offer.

Our goal now is to make sure every successful candidate in the October local government elections and key council staff commit to act on the priorities in *Local Government and the Visitor Industry: A Powerful Partnership*. Our industry also needs to be much more proactive in building this partnership - and that starts with voting on 9 October!

Read the document on TIA's website www.tianz.org.nz