

Media Statement

TE KAHUI TUPUA TIANZ WIN “VERY THICK ICING ON A VERY LARGE CAKE”

Ruapehu District Council Chief Executive, David Hammond, who as Project Leader and Chairman of the Regional Economic Development Trust that oversaw Te Kahui Tupua operations for the last two years said that being a winner in the highly prestigious 2010 Tourism Industry Awards (Local government Helping visitor Industry) was “very thick icing on an amazingly big cake”.

Mr Hammond stated that Te Kahui Tupua has out delivered across the board against its target objectives.

“Last month Te Kahui Tupua took out the overall ‘Supreme Award’ for ‘excellence in local government’ as well as the ‘Joined-Up Local Government Category’ that recognised projects that involved a local authority working together with one or more agencies or organisations to advance a common goal at the 2010 New Zealand Post ‘Local Government Excellence Awards’ at the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) conference in Queenstown,” he said.

“However, as brilliant as the SOLGM award is, first and foremost Te Kahui Tupua is a tourism brand and so to win a major, prestigious tourism award, from the largest representative body of tourism industry operators in New Zealand, that collectively make-up over 85% of the country’s tourism turnover, is absolutely amazing and a significant boost to the regional tourism operators who believed and supported the Te Kahui Tupua vision.”

“Te Kahui Tupua could not have been the major success that it is without these operators and this TIANZ award is for all the people and organisations that have backed and supported the Te Kahui Tupua concept since its inception and have nurtured it through to the success it is today.”

Mr Hammond said that the TIANZ award recognizes that Te Kahui Tupua’s provincial and rural tourism operators are highly innovative, and have the ability to ‘punch well above their weight’, and deliver outcomes for themselves, their district, communities and region that are on par or exceeding what anyone else in the country is doing.

“Te Kahui Tupua has been a unique five year collaboration of some eleven iwi, three local authorities, their three District/Regional Tourism Organisations (DTO/RTO) as well as the Whanganui Maori RTO, and well over a hundred (and growing) tourism operators working together in a regional tourism cluster with funding support from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise,” he said.

“The initiative for the three local authorities that have collaborated on the development of the Te Kahui Tupua brand, being the Ruapehu, Whanganui and Rangitikei District Councils, was in response to dire economic and social indicators from the late 1990’s that saw these Districts under achieve against their potential and lag other provincial economies.”

“Operationally Te Kahui Tupua is a tourism sector capability-building and branding project aimed at raising the performance of the tourism sector in the region to become ‘export-ready’ for the international visitor market, as well as coordinated enough as a combined sector group to compete for this region’s share of New Zealand’s growing tourism industry both domestic and international.”

Mr Hammond noted that Te Kahui Tupua has greatly assisted growing the region’s small, independent tourism sector into an export-ready, coordinated group of well-trained tourism operators able to compete against the likes of Queenstown for a slice of NZ tourism.

“The development of Te Kahui Tupua has assisted in diversifying the regional economy which can now rely on the tourism sector for being able to better cushion against recessions and has in-fact been a significant contributor as to why Ruapehu has fared better than many in the current economic climate,” he said.

“Te Kahui Tupua has been widely acknowledged as delivering a more authentic cultural experience to overseas visitors with the use of the Iwi brand (with Iwi permission) than many of the more established cultural tourism products currently on the NZ market.”

Mr Hammond added that at the same time Te Kahui Tupua has also provided a central platform for bringing Iwi into the regional economy and growing the employment opportunities for Maori people.

“The depth and breadth of Iwi involvement has been a unique aspect of Te Kahui Tupua development with Maori integrated into tourism governance, contributing their brand story, as well as Maori tourism operators taking a significant part in operator training, product development and Te Kahui Tupua marketing at events such as TRENZ,” he said.

“Other significant progress was achieved with the development of Te Kahui Tupua Brand Ambassadors being regional tourism operators who completed the ELEVATE Fast Track training programme and business mentoring.”

Mr Hammond noted that the Brand Ambassador programme was another ‘stunning success’ as part of the development of Te Kahui Tupua as well as another tourism innovation for NZ.

“The ELEVATE programme succeeded in training and providing ‘export-ready’ skills and knowledge to almost a quarter (24%) of the region’s tourism industry, with that number rising to 52% for Ruapehu operators,” he said.

Craig Wilson, Managing Director of Quality Tourism Development, the organisation contracted to provide the ELEVATE training said that TKT was one of the few tourism regions where the operators were continuing to actively network amongst themselves although they also compete at some levels.

“The business skills and one-on-one mentoring provided to TKT operators through the ELEVATE training has seen them recognise the value in networking and developing ‘tourism clusters’ to develop new products, services and itineraries instead of competing ‘head-on’,” he said.

“This creative approach which is ‘the future’ of tourism marketing in NZ is a key part of Te Kahui Tupua’s competitive advantage that has already seen 11 new export-ready products and five new tourism ‘product clusters’ been developed between what were traditional competitors.”

Mr Hammond commented that Te Kahui Tupua has successfully delivered its key goal of establishing a major new tourism collective to promote the Ruapehu, Wanganui and Rangitikei districts to the international tourism market while providing significant ‘spin off’ benefits to Te Kahui Tupua operators domestic offerings.

“The Tourism Industry Awards and SOLGM awards highlight to those who have been part of the Te Kahui Tupua journey to date that they have been part of history and helped ‘future proof’ the regional economy and their own futures.”

End.