

## Notes on the Economic and Community Benefit of the West Coast Wilderness Trail

The trail as a man made, single asset has been one of the largest economic boosts to the visitor industry on the West Coast in decades, especially Westland.

The trail has become a key mainstream recreational asset for residents of all ages, just like a sports centre, courts and the swimming pool. There are so many people on it all the time. This all contributes to the physical and social well-being of residents. The trail has also become a main transport route for the community, especially the Kaniere Tram that provides a safe commuting link for youth.

Below is a summary of the growth in communities and businesses. Of note, all the money coming in from the trail is going directly into all these businesses who then are able to employ people and purchase goods and services. It is therefore channelled straight back into the community on a multiplier put forward by MBIE of 3.45 for every dollar invested.

It has been the catalyst and backbone of many existing and new businesses. It has been responsible for the revival of the Kumara community including Kumara's Theatre Royal Hotel rebuild with the addition of six miner's cottages and the immaculate restoration of three early houses into accommodation. It has led to new ventures like the Greenstone Retreat, together with a number of other houses converted to Air BnBs and further investment Route 73 Motels and Kumara Store. The latest development, the refurbishment of the former Empire Hotel with a café operating for morning and lunchtime meals, is planned to open mid 2023 with 3 studio units and 3-4 back packer rooms to follow.

The West Coast Scenic Waterway at Mahinapua Creek is another business born from the trail. Starting with boat tours down the scenic Mahinapua Creek, owners Cindy and Gavin Hopper have now expanded into accommodation, meals and hot tubs, coupled with kayak and bike hire. The latest addition, due to open shortly, is the wholesome food and beverage cart, Forager's.

The West Coast Treetop Café and Walk has also been a big beneficiary from the trail. Ideally located as a coffee or lunch stop for travellers going either way, the newly opened Zipline is also likely to be popular with riders.

At the southern end of the trail, the Coast's first container camping ground was established specifically to cater for riders. Now operating as the Ross Beach Top 10 Holiday Park, the site is about to grow with the addition of four new sets of dome accommodation.

Shuttle and bike hire services have now grown to three significant companies, Kiwi Journeys, West Coast Cycle and Tours and Cycle Journeys, all with depots in Hokitika. There are also a number of bike companies based off the Coast that run continuous tour group trips. The local bike shops are doing a busy trade with sales, repairs and hire bikes.

The trail also supports many other businesses, especially in Hokitika, including bars and restaurants, virtually all accommodation and other tourism providers like, for example, Hokitika Scenic Tours who provide riders with wider excursions around the region.

### **Stats on the Trail**

Numbers: Estimated number of visiting riders is around 20,000 per year with approximately 8,000 riding the full trail.

The average length of stay is four days on the trail and at least one further day in the region.

Economic spend is around \$250 per rider per day.

The trail, with multipliers, is generating around three times the capital cost to build each year back into the community, estimated at over \$40 million.

**For the equivalent of one FTE, that is a pretty good investment.**