



Discussion Paper

Westland Tourism Experience and Visitor Economy

Context, Economic Value, and Visitor Experience

"The future opportunity is not to spend more on tourism, but to organise the tourism investment we already make in a way that delivers greater value for visitors, businesses, communities and ratepayers."

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Purpose

Tourism is an important part of life on the West Coast. It contributes to the local economy, supports businesses and jobs, helps sustain services and facilities, and plays a role in how Westland is experienced by both visitors and residents.

Tourism is changing. Visitor expectations are evolving, tourism experiences are becoming more diverse, and there is increasing discussion nationally about destination management, visitor infrastructure, funding, and the role local government should play in supporting the visitor economy.

The purpose of this paper is to provide information and context to support community discussion about tourism in Westland:

- The contribution tourism makes to the district
- What makes up the wider tourism experience
- The role Council currently plays in supporting tourism
- How tourism-related activities and infrastructure are funded
- Opportunities and challenges associated with the visitor economy
- Emerging trends that may influence the future of tourism in Westland

This paper is not a tourism strategy and does not make decisions about the future of tourism in Westland. Rather, it is intended to support informed discussion by providing an overview of the tourism experience, the current tourism system, emerging trends, and a potential future direction for how tourism and the visitor economy could be delivered. In doing so, it also explores the evolving role of local government in supporting the visitor economy through destination management, visitor infrastructure, public amenities, visitor servicing, partnerships and long-term planning.

Tourism and the Westland Economy

Tourism is one of Westland's most significant industries and plays a major role in supporting local businesses, employment, and economic activity across the district.

Westland's internationally recognised natural environment, including its glaciers, rainforests, coastline, lakes, mountains, and World Heritage landscapes, attracts visitors from throughout New Zealand and around the world. Visitor spending supports a wide range of businesses and services throughout the district and contributes significantly to the local economy.

Tourism contributes approximately:

- \$155.1 million to the Westland District economy
- 17.7% of district GDP
- Approximately \$314.9 million in annual visitor expenditure across the district

Source: Informetrics

The visitor economy supports a broad range of sectors, including:

- Accommodation providers
- Cafés, restaurants, and hospitality businesses
- Retail businesses
- Transport operators
- Visitor attractions and activity providers
- Recreation and cultural experiences
- Trades, contractors, and local suppliers

Tourism is a significant source of employment. In 2025, approximately 1,550 people were employed within Westland's tourism sector, representing 32.9% of total district employment. This compares with 22.7% in 2000 and highlights the growing importance of tourism to the district economy.

The economic benefits of tourism extend beyond businesses directly involved in visitor activities. Visitor spending supports supply chains, creates employment opportunities, and helps sustain economic activity across many parts of the district.

Tourism is particularly important in a district with a relatively small resident population. Visitor spending helps support businesses and services that may otherwise be difficult to sustain year-round, particularly in smaller communities.



Credit Development West Coast

Tourism contributes significantly to the economic resilience of Westland. Beyond direct visitor expenditure, it supports local supply chains, employment opportunities, community events, recreation facilities, and businesses that contribute to the district's overall liveability.

Understanding the economic contribution of tourism provides context for considering the broader visitor experience and the role tourism plays within the district.

The Westland Tourism Experience

When people think about tourism in Westland, they often think first of the district's internationally recognised natural attractions, including its glaciers, rainforests, mountains, lakes, coastline, and UNESCO World Heritage landscapes. These natural assets, together with extensive public conservation land, outdoor recreation opportunities, and Westland's position on the South Island touring route, form the foundation of the district's visitor appeal.

However, the visitor experience extends well beyond individual attractions. Increasingly, visitors are seeking destinations that offer a range of experiences and opportunities to connect with local landscapes, communities, culture, recreation, and hospitality. Visitors are also looking for experiences that encourage them to spend more time in a destination and engage more deeply with the places they visit.

For many visitors, their experience of Westland is shaped by a combination of:

- Natural attractions and landscapes
- Hospitality and accommodation
- Recreation opportunities
- Events and local experiences
- Visitor information and support services
- Cultural and heritage experiences
- Public amenities and infrastructure
- The overall welcome and character of local communities

Together, these elements create the distinctive tourism experience that contributes to Westland's reputation as a destination and influences how visitors remember and recommend the district.

Events and Local Experiences

Events help shape the visitor experience and showcase the character of Westland.

From local community events through to larger visitor-focused events, events create opportunities for visitors and residents to come together, support local businesses, and strengthen the profile of the district.



The Wildfoods Festival remains one of Westland's and the West Coasts most recognised events and has become closely associated with the district's identity. In addition to attracting visitors, events such as Wildfoods help showcase local culture, hospitality, creativity, and community spirit.

Events create valuable opportunities for community groups, schools, sports clubs, and not-for-profit organisations. Through volunteering, fundraising activities, event support services, and participation opportunities, events can generate revenue, increase community visibility, and strengthen local networks and connections.

For many organisations, events provide fundraising opportunities while also encouraging community participation and building local pride. This broader contribution is part of the value events bring to Westland, supporting both the visitor economy and the social wellbeing of local communities.

Recreation and the Wilderness Trail

Outdoor recreation is a defining feature of Westland's tourism offering and continues to grow in popularity.

The West Coast Wilderness Trail is one of the district's most significant visitor assets and forms part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail network. The trail attracts domestic and international visitors and supports accommodation providers, hospitality businesses, transport operators, cycle services, and other local businesses throughout the district.

More broadly, Westland offers a wide range of recreation opportunities including:

- Walking and hiking
- Cycling and mountain biking
- Nature and wildlife experiences
- Fishing and water-based recreation
- Scenic touring
- Adventure activities



Credit Geoff Marks

These experiences contribute to Westland's reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism.

Visitor Information and Support

Access to information remains key to the visitor experience.

While visitors increasingly use digital tools to research and plan their travel before arriving, many continue to value local knowledge, personalised advice and recommendations during their visit.

The Hokitika isite service has played an important role in supporting visitors to Westland for many years and currently supports visitors by providing:

- Visitor information and local knowledge
- Travel advice and recommendations
- Booking and referral services
- Information on events and attractions
- Support for visitors travelling throughout the district

Visitor information services help visitors discover experiences, explore local communities, and make the most of their time in Westland.

Access to trusted visitor information and local knowledge remains an important part of the visitor experience. However, the way visitors access that information continues to evolve. The current isite model has served Westland well and continues to provide an important service. However, the delivery of visitor information is changing, with visitors increasingly expecting information to be available through a range of channels before and during their visit. Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to consider how visitor information and support services can continue to evolve as part of an integrated visitor servicing model that reflects changing visitor expectations while continuing to provide trusted local knowledge and personalised support.

Looking Beyond Attractions

Increasingly, successful tourism destinations are recognised not only for their attractions but also for the quality of the overall experience they provide.

For Westland, this includes the combination of natural landscapes, recreation opportunities, events, hospitality, visitor services, cultural experiences, and community character that together create a distinctive and memorable destination.

Understanding what contributes to the visitor experience is important when considering the future of tourism within the district and the role different organisations play in supporting visitors and tourism-related activities.



Credit Clint Trahan

Who supports Tourism in Westland

Tourism is supported by a wide range of organisations, businesses, and community groups. While tourism is often associated with visitor attractions and accommodation providers, the visitor experience relies on many different organisations working together.

Development West Coast

Development West Coast is responsible for the regional tourism function on the West Coast. This includes destination marketing, regional tourism promotion, industry support, tourism research, and supporting implementation of the Te Tai Poutini Destination Management Plan.

Unlike all other regions in New Zealand except one, Regional Tourism Organisations are directly funded and managed by councils, the regional tourism function on the West Coast is funded and managed through Development West Coast.

This arrangement provides opportunities to align tourism with wider regional economic development objectives. However, it creates challenges because many of the assets, services, and experiences that contribute to the visitor experience are owned, managed, or funded by councils and other organisations rather than the Regional Tourism Organisation itself.

For example, councils are responsible for infrastructure and services that support visitors, including public amenities, visitor information services, roads, parking, reserves, trails, signage, and public spaces. Decisions relating to these assets can have a significant impact on the visitor experience, yet responsibility for planning, funding, and maintaining them sits separately from the regional tourism promotion function.

This can create a disconnect between destination marketing, visitor growth aspirations, infrastructure planning, and the funding required to support visitor demand. As tourism continues to evolve, effective collaboration between Development West Coast, councils, iwi, tourism operators, and community organisations will remain important to ensure tourism promotion, visitor infrastructure, destination management, and community priorities remain aligned.

Westland District Council

Unlike many other sectors of the district's economy, such as agriculture, forestry and mining, tourism relies heavily on public infrastructure, shared spaces and visitor services that are planned, funded or facilitated by local government. While businesses deliver many of the visitor experiences themselves, the overall visitor experience is also shaped by the quality of public amenities, transport connections, recreation assets, visitor information, events and the character of the places people visit.

For this reason, local government plays a broader role in tourism than it does in many other industries. In addition to providing core public infrastructure and services, councils throughout New Zealand increasingly contribute to destination management, visitor servicing, events, place activation and the planning required to support sustainable growth in the visitor economy.

While Council is not responsible for regional destination marketing, it plays a significant role in supporting the wider visitor economy through investment in services, facilities and infrastructure that benefit both visitors and residents.

Council currently contributes to tourism through:

- Visitor information services, including the Hokitika isite
- Public amenities such as toilets, reserves, and public spaces

- The management and maintenance of the West Coast Wilderness Trail
- Supporting events and community activities
- Visitor signage and wayfinding
- Roads, parking, and local infrastructure used by visitors and residents
- Working with tourism and community partners to support visitor experiences

Council administers several tourism-related funding mechanisms that support different aspects of the visitor economy.

The Tourism Promotion Rate is collected by Council and is used to support tourism-related activities including the operation of the Hokitika isite and the management and maintenance of the West Coast Wilderness Trail.

Council also collects targeted rates on behalf of local tourism organisations. These include:

- The Destination Hokitika rate, which is collected by Council on behalf of Destination Hokitika to support local destination marketing and promotional activities.
- The Glacier Country Tourism Group targeted rate, which supports local tourism promotion and destination marketing activities within South Westland.

In addition to these tourism-specific funding mechanisms, Council invests in public infrastructure and services that support both residents and visitors, including roads, parking, public amenities, reserves, trails, signage and public spaces.

As tourism has evolved, so too has the role of local government. Increasingly, councils are expected not only to provide supporting infrastructure but also to work alongside industry, iwi, communities and central government to help coordinate the visitor economy, support destination management and ensure tourism contributes positively to both local communities and the wider economy.

Department of Conservation

The Department of Conservation (DOC) plays a significant role in the Westland visitor experience. Approximately 84% of the Westland District is public conservation land managed by DOC, including many of the landscapes and attractions that draw visitors to the region.

DOC is responsible for managing:

- National parks and conservation areas
- Walking tracks and visitor facilities on conservation land
- Visitor information and interpretation
- Protection of natural and cultural values
- Visitor access to many of the district's iconic natural attractions



Unlike private landowners, public conservation land is non-rateable and does not contribute to the Council's rating base. DOC receives funding directly from central government to manage conservation land and visitor facilities located on that land.

However, many of the services and infrastructure used by visitors sit outside the conservation estate and are funded or maintained by council.

This creates a unique situation for Westland. While much of the visitor experience is centred around public conservation land, many of the supporting services and infrastructure required to accommodate visitors are funded through local rates and Council budgets.

As visitor numbers increase and visitor expectations evolve, ongoing coordination between DOC, Council, Development West Coast, tourism operators, iwi, and community organisations becomes increasingly important to ensure the wider visitor experience is well supported and sustainably managed.

Iwi, Tourism Operators and Community Organisations

Tourism in Westland is supported by a diverse network of organisations, businesses, community groups, volunteers, and individuals who collectively contribute to the visitor experience.

Iwi

Poutini Ngāi Tahu, through Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio, play a key role in shaping the cultural identity of the district and the stories that make Westland unique.

Iwi contribute through:

- Cultural leadership and stewardship
- Sharing the history, traditions, and stories of Te Tai o Poutini
- Protecting and enhancing cultural and environmental values
- Supporting cultural tourism opportunities
- Participation in destination management and regional planning initiatives

As visitors increasingly seek authentic and meaningful experiences, Māori culture, history, and connection to place are becoming an increasingly important part of the wider tourism experience.



Tourism Operators and Businesses

Tourism businesses are at the forefront of the visitor experience and play a significant role in attracting visitors to the district.

This includes:

- Accommodation providers
- Hospitality businesses
- Visitor attractions and activity providers
- Transport operators
- Retail businesses
- Tourism service providers

These organisations invest in experiences, facilities, products, and services that contribute directly to the local economy and help shape how visitors experience Westland.

Tourism contributes to a local circular economy, where visitor spending continues to circulate throughout the district. Revenue generated through accommodation, hospitality, attractions, and visitor services is often reinvested locally through wages, local suppliers, contractors, and business-to-business spending.

As a result, the benefits of tourism extend well beyond the tourism sector itself, supporting a wide range of businesses, employment opportunities, and economic activity across Westland. This interconnected activity helps strengthen the resilience of the local economy and highlights the role tourism plays in supporting communities.

Community Organisations, Events and Volunteers

Community organisations, volunteers, and event organisers also make a contribution to the visitor economy and wider tourism experience.

Across Westland, community groups help support:

- Festivals and events
- Recreation opportunities
- Community facilities
- Visitor experiences
- Environmental initiatives
- Cultural and heritage activities

Many events rely heavily on volunteers and community support. These activities not only contribute to the visitor experience but also provide opportunities for fundraising, community participation, and showcasing local talent, products, and culture.

Local Communities

Local communities themselves are part of the visitor experience. The character of Westland's towns, the hospitality shown to visitors, and the pride communities take in their local areas all contribute to how the district is perceived and experienced.

Increasingly, successful tourism destinations recognise that tourism is not delivered by a single organisation. Rather, it is the collective contribution that creates the experiences visitors value and remember.

Working Together

While each organisation and sector has different responsibilities, their collective efforts help support the visitor economy, enhance the visitor experience, and contribute to the overall attractiveness of Westland as a place to visit, live, work, and invest.

Visitor Infrastructure and Servicing

Visitors are attracted to Westland's landscapes, recreation opportunities, events, and experiences, they also rely on a range of supporting infrastructure and services during their stay.

Many of these services are provided by Council and are used by both residents and visitors.

These include:

- Public toilets and amenities
- Car parks and visitor access areas
- Roads and transport connections
- Walking and cycling infrastructure
- Signage and wayfinding
- Reserves and public spaces
- Waste management services
- Visitor information services



Credit Nomad Audio and Video

For a district with a relatively small resident population, maintaining infrastructure that supports both residents and visitors can be challenging. In some locations, visitor demand can place significant pressure on facilities and services, particularly during peak tourism periods.

Westland has successfully secured external funding for a number of tourism-related projects, including visitor infrastructure and recreation assets. However, while external funding can assist with the development of new facilities, the ongoing costs of operating, maintaining, renewing, and replacing these assets generally remain with Council and the community.

This is particularly relevant in Westland, where many visitors come to experience public conservation land managed by the Department of Conservation, while much of the supporting infrastructure they use before, during, and after their visit is funded and maintained locally.

As tourism continues to evolve, a consideration for the district is how visitor infrastructure and services can be maintained and funded in a way that continues to support both visitors and local communities.

Tourism Funding and the Tourism Promotion Rate

Supporting the visitor experience requires ongoing investment in visitor services, infrastructure, recreation assets, information services, destination promotion, and tourism-related activities.

Like many tourism destinations throughout New Zealand, Westland uses a combination of funding sources to support tourism-related activities. These include general rates, targeted rates, external funding, government grants, user charges, and contributions from businesses and community organisations.

The Tourism Promotion Rate

Westland District Council collects a Tourism Promotion Rate which contributes towards a range of tourism-related activities.

The Tourism Promotion Rate currently supports:

- The operation of the Hokitika isite
- The management and maintenance of the West Coast Wilderness Trail

The rate recognises that these activities support the wider visitor economy and contribute to the overall tourism experience within the district.



Destination Hokitika and Glacier Country Tourism Group

In addition to the Tourism Promotion Rate, local destination marketing activities are supported through separate funding arrangements.

Destination Hokitika is funded through a targeted rate collected by Council on behalf of Destination Hokitika. The rate applies to commercial businesses within the defined Hokitika area and is used to support local destination marketing, promotional activities, and initiatives that encourage visitation to Hokitika and surrounding communities.

Glacier Country Tourism Group receives funding through area-specific targeted rates collected within South Westland. This funding supports destination marketing and promotional activities focused on the Glacier Country area and the unique visitor experiences available within South Westland.

These funding arrangements are separate from the Tourism Promotion Rate and are specifically intended to support local destination marketing and promotion rather than visitor servicing or tourism infrastructure.

Together, these funding mechanisms reflect the different ways tourism-related activities are supported across the district, recognising that visitor servicing, tourism promotion, infrastructure, and destination development are often funded through different sources and for different purposes.

How Tourism is Funded in Westland

Tourism-related activities in Westland are supported through a range of funding sources. The table below provides an overview of the key tourism-related funding mechanisms and what they support.

Funding Source	Purpose	Examples
Tourism Promotion Rate	Visitor services and tourism assets	Hokitika isite, Wilderness Trail
Destination Hokitika Targeted Rate	Local destination marketing	Hokitika promotion and visitor attraction
Glacier Country Tourism Group Targeted Rate	South Westland destination marketing	Glacier Country promotion
External Funding	Tourism and recreation projects	Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TIF), Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF), Ngā Haerenga, government grants
General Rates	Visitor infrastructure used by residents and visitors	Toilets, reserves, parking, signage, public spaces

While each of these funding mechanisms serves a different purpose, together they illustrate the fragmentation of the tourism system within Westland. Visitor servicing, destination promotion, infrastructure, recreation assets, events, and tourism experiences are often funded through separate arrangements and delivered by different organisations. While this reflects the way tourism has evolved over time, it can also create challenges in aligning priorities, coordinating investment, and delivering a consistent visitor experience across the district.

External Funding

Historically, Westland has secured funding through programmes such as:

- Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TIF)
- Ngā Haerenga New Zealand Cycle Trail funding
- Regional development and government investment programmes
- Other contestable tourism and recreation funding opportunities

These funding sources have helped support the development of visitor infrastructure and tourism assets throughout the district.

However, external funding is generally:

- Contestable
- Project specific
- Time limited
- Not guaranteed in the future

While it can assist with capital development and upgrades, ongoing maintenance, renewal, and operational costs typically remain the responsibility of the asset owner.

Funding Challenges

One of the challenges facing tourism destinations is that many tourism-related facilities and services require ongoing investment long after their initial construction.

While external funding can assist with the development of new infrastructure and tourism assets, responsibility for ongoing maintenance, renewals, and operational costs generally remains with the asset owner.

For Westland, this is particularly relevant because many visitors are attracted to public conservation land and visitor experiences, while a significant proportion of the supporting infrastructure and services they use are funded and maintained locally.

As visitor expectations evolve and infrastructure ages, councils and communities throughout New Zealand are increasingly considering how tourism-related assets and services can be funded over the long term.

Different Perspectives

There are differing views on how tourism-related activities should be funded.

Some people consider tourism-specific funding mechanisms important because they help support visitor services, tourism assets, and infrastructure that contribute to the local economy and visitor experience.

Others question how tourism-related costs should be shared between visitors, businesses, ratepayers, local government, and central government.



There is no single approach used across New Zealand, and many visitor destinations continue to explore different funding models and partnerships to support tourism-related activities.

Looking Ahead

The Tourism funding and model is likely to remain an ongoing topic of discussion for Westland.

Future considerations may include:

- Maintaining visitor services and tourism assets
- Funding infrastructure renewals and upgrades
- Securing external funding opportunities
- Balancing contributions from visitors, businesses, ratepayers, and government
- Understanding the role Council should continue to play in supporting tourism

Understanding the different funding mechanisms that currently support tourism helps provide context for future discussions about the visitor economy and the tourism experience in Westland.

Future Considerations for Tourism in Westland

Tourism in Westland is supported through a network of organisations, infrastructure, services, funding mechanisms, community groups, businesses, and public agencies. As tourism continues to evolve, there are opportunities to strengthen how these different components work together to support both visitors and local communities.

Better Coordination and Alignment

Tourism in Westland involves a range of organisations with different responsibilities, including Development West Coast, Westland District Council, the Department of Conservation, iwi, tourism operators, community organisations and event organisers. As visitor expectations continue to evolve, there are opportunities to strengthen collaboration and better align destination promotion, visitor infrastructure, visitor servicing and long-term planning. Visitors do not distinguish between these organisations—they experience Westland as a single destination.

Maximising Existing Investment

Westland has invested significantly over many years in tourism-related infrastructure, visitor facilities, recreation assets, events, the West Coast Wilderness Trail, public spaces, visitor services and destination development. These investments, together with the district's natural and cultural assets, form the foundation of the visitor economy.

As future investment decisions are considered, there is an opportunity to maximise the value of existing assets and funding by ensuring they are planned, managed and promoted as part of an integrated visitor economy. This is not necessarily about increasing investment, but about achieving greater efficiency, effectiveness and value from the investment already being made by Council, ratepayers, businesses and external funding partners.

Future discussions may consider how existing assets, services and investment can be better coordinated and utilised to support both residents and visitors. This includes consideration of:

- Long-term asset management
- Visitor servicing
- Experience development
- Infrastructure utilisation
- Community use of tourism assets
- Coordination of tourism investment and funding
- Opportunities to improve efficiency and value for money
- Leveraging partnerships and external funding to maximise local investment.

Sustainable Funding

Funding remains one of the most significant considerations for tourism destinations throughout New Zealand.

Many tourism-related assets and services require ongoing maintenance, renewal, and operational funding long after their initial development.

Future discussions should consider:

- The role of the Tourism Promotion Rate
- Funding for visitor infrastructure and services
- Opportunities for external funding
- The balance between local and national contributions
- Long-term sustainability of tourism-related assets

Responding to Changing Expectations

Visitor expectations continue to evolve, particularly around information access, quality facilities, accessibility, environmental stewardship, and the overall visitor experience.

At the same time, communities increasingly expect tourism-related investment to deliver benefits that extend beyond visitors and contribute to the places where people live and work.

Understanding how these expectations influence future investment priorities will remain a key consideration.

Resilience and Adaptation

Westland's tourism experience is closely linked to its natural environment and outdoor recreation opportunities.

As infrastructure ages and climate-related events continue to affect transport networks, public facilities, and tourism assets, resilience and adaptation are likely to become increasingly important considerations for asset owners and funding agencies.

Looking Ahead

Tourism is likely to remain a significant part of Westland's economy, identity, and community life.

The key challenge is not necessarily how to attract more visitors, but how to continue supporting a high-quality tourism experience through effective collaboration, sustainable funding, well-maintained infrastructure, and coordinated planning.

Understanding these considerations provides context for future discussions about how tourism could continue to be organised and supported in Westland. As the visitor economy evolves, there is an opportunity to consider whether the current delivery model remains the most effective approach, or whether a more integrated model could better support the district's long-term aspirations.

A Future Model for Delivering Tourism in Westland

This paper demonstrates that tourism should not be a collection of separate activities. It is an interconnected visitor economy where visitor servicing, destination management, events, infrastructure and investment all contribute to the overall visitor experience.

As tourism continues to evolve, the opportunity is not to invest more in tourism, but to organise existing investment in a way that delivers better outcomes for visitors, businesses, communities and ratepayers.

Rather than delivering visitor servicing, destination marketing, events, destination development and tourism investment through separate organisations, a future model could progressively consolidate these complementary functions within a single destination management organisation responsible for planning, coordinating and growing Westland's visitor economy. This would simplify the current delivery model and provide one organisation with clear accountability for tourism outcomes.



Initially, this model could be implemented within Council by progressively consolidating existing tourism functions into a single destination management function. This approach would enable the model to be established and refined within existing governance arrangements before considering whether a different organisational structure is warranted to best support the long-term growth and management of Westland's visitor economy.

This would also provide a single point of accountability for the performance of the visitor economy, enabling Council and the community to more clearly understand how tourism investment is contributing to agreed economic, social and visitor outcomes.

It is proposed that Development West Coast would continue as the Regional Tourism Organisation, leading regional destination marketing, industry development and implementation of the regional Destination Management Plan. The district destination management organisation would complement this role by coordinating Westland's visitor services, destination development, events and local investment, ensuring regional promotion is supported by a high-quality visitor experience on the ground. Together, these organisations would provide a clearer connection between regional destination marketing and local destination delivery.

Its role could include:

- visitor servicing and visitor information
- destination management and visitor experience planning
- local destination marketing
- event development and coordination
- tourism investment and funding coordination
- industry partnerships and product development
- visitor research and destination performance
- attracting external funding, sponsorship and commercial opportunities.

By bringing these complementary functions together within one organisation, Westland would have a single point of leadership and accountability for its visitor economy. This would improve coordination, better align existing investment, reduce duplication, create commercial opportunities and strengthen the district's ability to deliver long-term visitor, community and economic outcomes.

Importantly, this model is not about retaining or replacing any particular facility. It is about ensuring visitor services are delivered in the ways visitors expect, while creating a more integrated, efficient and financially sustainable model for the future.

Delivering Better Outcomes

Should Council choose to explore a more integrated approach to delivering the visitor economy, success would be measured by whether existing tourism investment is working more effectively together to deliver improved outcomes.

Over time, Council could consider whether the approach is achieving:

- better coordination across the visitor economy
- stronger alignment between tourism investment and district priorities
- more effective use of existing funding and resources
- improved visitor experiences
- greater opportunities for commercial partnerships and external investment
- increased value for ratepayers and local communities.

Ultimately, success would be reflected not in new structures or additional investment, but in the ability to deliver a more connected, efficient and sustainable visitor economy for Westland.

Conclusion

Tourism is one of Westland's most significant economic drivers and contributes not only to the district's economy but also to its identity, liveability and community wellbeing.

This paper has demonstrated that delivering a high-quality visitor experience relies on many organisations, businesses and communities working together. Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to consider whether a more integrated model for delivering tourism could better align existing investment, strengthen accountability, improve coordination and create a more commercially sustainable visitor economy for Westland.

Ultimately, the opportunity is not to invest more in tourism, but to ensure the investment already being made delivers the greatest possible value for visitors, businesses, communities and ratepayers.

