



Media release

Te Manahuna Ki Uta Destination Mackenzie

Headline: *Have your say and help shape the future of Te Manahuna/the Mackenzie Basin.*

‘How do we strike the right balance, keep what we love about living and visiting here, and create a more sustainable future for Te Manahuna/the Mackenzie Basin?’

That’s the big question being put to locals, visitors and all those who have an interest in the region this month, with the launch of a new project ‘Te Manahuna Ki Uta/Destination Mackenzie’

Led by Mackenzie District Council and mana whenua, the project will confirm a 100-year vision for Te Manahuna/Mackenzie Basin.

The public have an opportunity to share their ideas over the next month at a series of drop-in sessions or online on the Mackenzie District Council website.

The project brings together different voices from local and national government, with mana whenua, visitors to the region and the local community. It will develop a Destination Management Plan that will consider Te Manahuna/the Mackenzie Basin along with some of Aotearoa New Zealand’s top natural attractions such as Aoraki Mt Cook National Park and the Lindis Pass.

Mackenzie District Council Mayor Graham Smith says the rapid growth of tourism in the past put unsustainable pressure on local communities, the environment and infrastructure which has been challenging for a council with a small ratepayer base.

“The Destination Management Plan will include actions, likely costs, and policy and regulation guidance to help us move forward from that over the coming decades, he says.

“It will set a direction for our future tourism to achieve regenerative outcomes not only for our environment but for mana whenua and residents in our communities.”

Tourism Minister Stuart Nash says the Mackenzie Basin is a unique landscape.

“It is one of those iconic destinations which makes this country so appealing to international visitors, and which increasingly draws domestic tourists off the beaten track too.

“This project is not only strategically important for the local communities of the Mackenzie, it aligns closely with work to enhance the entire tourism industry in this country.

Projects such as Te Manahuna Ki Uta recognise that post-COVID, the tourism industry will not simply return to ‘business as usual.’

“We want to ensure Aotearoa remains one of the world's most aspirational travel destinations. We must mitigate the negative impacts associated with tourism and ensure the full cost of tourism is priced into the visitor experience, so ratepayers and taxpayers don’t carry an unfair burden.

“Partnerships across central government, local government and iwi are key to achieving this.”

Chief Executive of Mackenzie District Council, Suzette van Aswegen says the project will inform future planning work and provide a basis for infrastructure investment, attracting future investment into the region. More importantly, it will be a guide for tourism that will protect the region’s precious values and create exceptional visitor experiences.”

David Higgins, Upoko Runaka and mana whenua spokesperson for the project says Te Manahuna is an incredibly special place, much loved by visitors and locals.

“Its fragile ecosystem is home to hundreds of threatened or endangered species, some not found in any other parts of New Zealand,” he says.

“It’s a significant cultural landscape for mana whenua, and its clear night skies offer some of the best stargazing on earth. It’s important we get this right to ensure we protect this special and rare place for future generations.”

“We want to get people thinking long into the future about what they want Te Manahuna/Mackenzie Basin to be known for, the type of tourists they want to attract, and how this will shape life for locals,” says Mayor Smith.

“On our ‘Must Have’ list is resilient and viable communities, high-quality liveability for residents and targeted, quality experiences for visitors.

“We also want to protect and celebrate our unique natural landscape and the science and spirituality behind it, our history and culture. It’s time to rebalance our heritage story and reflect mana whenua’s experience and whakapapa too.”

Following this initial engagement period there will be a further opportunity to provide feedback before the Draft Plan is developed, with the release of the Final Plan expected in late 2021.

Te Manahuna Ki Uta is being led by Mackenzie District Council (MDC), together with Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua, Te Rūnanga o Waihao, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Department of Conservation, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand, and the Mackenzie Development Group.

For more information about the project, details of upcoming drop-in sessions, or to have your say, visit Mackenzie District Council’s online engagement platform www.letstalk.mackenzie.govt.nz.