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Media release

More mountains to climb on development of new National Park plans

New management tools and catering for the different needs and aspirations of all stakeholder groups are essential for managing our National Parks, says Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA).

In submissions to the Department of Conservation (DOC), TIA has given its detailed recommendations on the Management Plan Reviews for Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks.

DOC has announced that the reviews are now on hold, while it works through the implications of a Supreme Court decision relating to iwi rights.

National Park Plans are only reviewed approximately every ten years, and TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says while it works through the iwi issue, DOC should be taking note of the advice provided by TIA and dozens of other submitters.

In its two submissions, TIA notes that the Conservation/Tourism Partnership is one of the key relationships for the tourism industry. The primary reason many of our international visitors come to New Zealand is to see our vistas and landscapes and experience the outdoors, and much of this activity occurs on the conservation estate. Many New Zealanders feel a close affinity to nature and seek out experiences around the country.

“Our domestic population and visitor economy are now both of a size where people cannot expect to do whatever they like, whenever and wherever they want in our national parks.

“There will be necessary changes in how we manage people’s strong appetite to visit our National Parks, and we support the use of management tools such as park and ride and hut booking systems to manage activities. However, this will require significant adjustment for many people who visit either with the support or tourism operators, or under their own steam.”

TIA firmly believes that the needs of different groups can be met and that all visitor experiences can be catered for in the Parks, albeit not always in the same place and at the same time.

“A step change is necessary in how we manage our national parks. TIA can see that DOC are trying to achieve this and we support their effort to do so. There is, however, much to be worked through in the detail of the National Park Plans to ensure these efforts achieve their intended outcomes.”

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Inspire House, 125 Featherston St, Wellington 6011, New Zealand
P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz



TIA notes that the National Park Act aims to preserve our highly valued natural places in perpetuity – for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public.

“The Plans would better reflect our and the New Zealand public’s expectations if they gave more weight to the importance of the conservation aspect of the management of the Parks. Good conservation and visitor outcomes must both be achieved.”

One of the particular challenges of the Aoraki/Mount Cook Plan is that it includes the management of Mount Cook Village. TIA commends DOC’s efforts to retain the community heart of the Village whilst enabling its function as a destination in itself and gateway to the Park.

TIA urges DOC to listen carefully to submissions from recreational groups and concessionaires and adjust the Plans until the different visitor experiences are catered for and well understood. TIA identifies in its submissions more than 40 areas of the draft Plans where further analysis and discussion is required.

In 2015, DOC and TIA signed a formal partnership agreement which seeks to provide for both tourism and conservation in a mutually beneficial framework.

“We look forward to working with the Department and other stakeholders to refine the drafts and develop Park Plans which meets the challenges of today’s context as well as being fit for purpose over the full life of the Plans,” says Chris Roberts.

TIA’s submissions on the Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park Management Plan and the Westland Tai Poutini National Park Plan can be found [here](#).

For more information, please contact:

Nic Still

Communications Advisor

027 215 6124

nic.still@tia.org.nz

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KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$107 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$44 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$63 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism is New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$16.2 billion or 20.6% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2018).
- 13.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 365,316 people are working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

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