

## **Destination Management – Heritage & Culture Focus Group – 23.6.21**

### **Context**

Tourism Waitaki, our Regional Tourism Organisation, is leading development of a Destination Management strategy and plan for the district. The strategy horizon is long term – 30+ years. COVID has given us the chance to reflect on the future, think about the sort of visitors we want to welcome and the legacy we will leave for future generations. Community engagement is an important part of the development process and surveys and discussion groups across the district are helping to inform the thinking.

A Heritage & Culture focus group took place in the Oamaru Opera House on 23.6.21 to share the survey results and workshop core issues and opportunities. 28 people responded to the survey and 25 attended the workshop.

Below is a summary of the key points discussed.

### **Key Outcomes sought from Destination Management**

Rankings were close, the top three were:

- Protection of our built and cultural heritage and stories – 4.79
- A thriving and welcoming district for visitors – 4.64
- Protection of our whenua/natural environment -4.61

“It’s up to the Waitaki community to make this a place people want to visit”.

### **What makes Waitaki unique and different?**

Unsurprisingly, the protection of our built & cultural heritage and stories throughout the District is seen as vital. Ōamaru’s harbour and architecture are stand outs alongside the diverse landscapes, geography, and geology.

Top three priorities

- Well preserved Ōamaru harbour, Victorian precinct, and the district’s architectural heritage- 4.54
- Our Geology & Geography – ancient landscapes/limestone – 4.36
- Diverse, uncrowded landscapes, easily navigated – 4.33

Other comments encouraged more sharing the Ngāi Tahu story and more overt promotion of our “Waitaki Grown” local produce

### **What makes Waitaki unique?**

heritage Different **Unique** diverse

In addition, Waitaki is seen as: authentic, unexpected, quirky and uncrowded

### **What types of visitors should be targeted in the future?**

Domestic and ‘slow travel’ visitors were prioritised while also ensuring we cater for the ordinary NZ family with memorable experiences. The opportunity to encourage more overnight stays from visitors was recognised as a core part of our visitor strategy.

- Domestic visitors – 4.68
- Slower paced travellers with money - 4.46

“People who appreciate our uniqueness”

**Breakout One – What visitor and “passion” groups should we target to promote our Heritage & Culture? Identify your top five targets.**

Several specialist groups were identified aligned to our identity and core assets. Broader targeting was not ruled out.

| Specialist Groups aligned to themes/pillars |                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General                                     | Quiet, Discerning travellers – Maori & Pakeha. People who want a quiet, relaxed destination. |
|                                             | Interested in Māori culture/Māori world                                                      |
|                                             | Educational institutes - School Groups; UA3 – University of the third age; Polytechnics      |
|                                             | Train Tourist                                                                                |
|                                             | Retirees – Probus, Lions, Rotary                                                             |
|                                             | Targeted car groups/ vintage car clubs                                                       |
|                                             | Travel clubs                                                                                 |
|                                             | Friends & Family Groups                                                                      |
|                                             | Work- place communities                                                                      |
| Architecture - Industrial                   | Engineering/Architecture students                                                            |
|                                             | Stonemasons/Artisans skilled at restoration                                                  |
| Art/Creatives/Artisans                      | Film makers & photographers                                                                  |
|                                             | Art Lovers; appreciators of design/architecture                                              |
|                                             | Cheese makers (conference opportunity)                                                       |
|                                             | Renovation groups                                                                            |
| Wildlife/Nature/Outdoors                    | Wildlife enthusiasts                                                                         |
|                                             | Stargazers                                                                                   |
| Geology                                     | University students                                                                          |
| Food & Beverage                             | Polytechnic students; foodies. Agri tourism – primary producers                              |
| Heritage                                    | History buffs/cultural enthusiasts                                                           |

**Ideas to activate**

- Develop “themed experience” packages. Sell to distributors.
- Fetes, Festivals and Conferences including guest speakers talking about local architecture, engineering and cheese making.
- Educational programmes for schools including parents.

Pounamu Heritage Train Tourism was noted as a good example of new target audience - matching a target visitor to local activities (e.g., guided tours, trip to Vanished World, Duntroon, Moeraki).

## Key barriers/ challenges to growing the visitor economy

The biggest barriers here are finding funding for development and insufficient public transport options. Seasonality and low visitor numbers during the off season also impacts economic viability.

- Funding for development – 4.46
- Transportation options – to/from/around the district – 4.46

Other comments related to Locals’ attitudes; lack of collaboration across groups, District marketing and promotion, staffing and service quality.

## Which heritage and cultural assets would you prioritise for investment?

Clarks Mill<sub>Estate</sub> Victorian Precinct<sub>Camp</sub> stories<sub>people</sub>  
 Harbour<sub>many</sub> buildings<sub>railways</sub> heritage<sub>farm</sub>  
 Oamaru<sub>Museum</sub> Harbour area development

The wealth of assets in the district made it difficult for the group to align on priorities. It was recognised dividing funding by interest group could lead to monies being spread too thinly - “depending on where your interest lies, you’ll feel that is the priority”. Ōamaru’s built heritage and industrial heritage (Clarks Mill) were call outs.

## Which built and cultural assets in Waitaki are underutilised and could be developed to benefit visitors and the community?

### Breakout 2 – which assets would you prioritise for investment and development and why? What barriers need to be overcome to do this?

Street<sub>precinct harbour area</sub> area<sub>developed</sub> story<sub>new</sub> heritage<sub>unique</sub>  
 visitors<sub>Waitaki</sub> built<sub>land</sub> need<sub>part</sub> Victorian Precinct  
 experiences Oamaru

Our architecture, built heritage, natural landmarks, improved wayfinding and storytelling were all prioritised.

| Area        | Development focus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oamaru ward | Victorian precinct & connection to neighbouring streets – Tyne, Tees, Itchen, Wansbeck. Ripple effect<br>Harbour front/esplanade underutilised<br>Forrester Gallery (lift)<br>RSA building<br>North End Ōamaru<br>Humber St seafront to Waitaki Boys school<br><br>Farmer’s market -Waitaki made/grown | Pedestrianise – block off vehicles<br>Story telling – NZ history in microcosm<br>Covenant of streetscapes and footprint<br>Heritage trails/brochures – develop a story telling app or visitor passport.<br>Walking tracks<br>Events<br>Improve decision making capabilities<br>Murals in keeping with heritage – brass rubbings, steam punk skulls<br>Permanent cover, improved site |
| Waihemo/    | Moeraki/geosites/Geology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Better story telling/interpretation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Corriedale/<br>Ahuriri                              | Puketapu<br>Palmerston Town Hall (notable architect) and Category 1 Presbyterian church<br>Ngāi Tahu landmarks/ stories<br>Gold mining<br>Food & Wine<br>Rural heritage/ Farming community (lime kilns, stables, carriage houses)<br>Ngapara/Clarks Mill/ farm buildings beyond Totara<br>Pig route development | Walking track. Encourage people to climb and then eat out at local cafes.<br>Palmerston Visitor Centre<br>Story telling app or visitor Passport.<br>Greater site interpretation. Real not tokenism.<br><br>Agri Tourism - Farm tours, primary producers<br>Cycle Trails<br><br>Replicate staging posts – cafes along the route. EV stations replacing coaching inns (for cars and bikes).<br>Heritage trails within settlements - Goldfields Trail. |
| Ngāi Tahu                                           | Stories of the first peoples, their innovation and adaptation to a new place<br>Willetts collection/Waitaha<br>Māori trading routes and sites                                                                                                                                                                   | Story telling app or visitor Passport.<br>Story Boards at sites of interest                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Geopark/<br>Environment/<br>Landscapes/<br>the Land | Protection of our flora, fauna, ecosystems, geology<br>Biodiversity – birdwatching, hunting, fishing, ocean.<br>The water story of Waitaki                                                                                                                                                                      | Geopark HQ as visitor attraction<br>A ‘water discovery’ centre<br>Waitaki Dam story                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

### Key enablers

A need for a focal point - an information centre - to impart information to visitors and encourage longer stays was strongly recommended. Rose’s General Store is acting as a commercial information centre today, open seven days a week. The Council Visitor Centre is limited to operating seven months - over spring, summer, and autumn. The radio station in Palmerston is supporting information sharing there and Kurow Information has information in the Waitaki Valley.

Encouraging current attractions/local businesses to more proactively cross promote as a credible way to promote district exploration and more immersive – Living Heritage – experiences.

More effective, engaging and joined up story telling across mana whenua, key stakeholders, and businesses. It is also a powerful way to engage locals, driving pride and advocacy. Linking stories to key themes -e.g. Water (Māori settlements/trading sites, mahinga kai, Waitaki river, hydro, fishing ++), Land (geology +) provides multiple lenses and story lines.

Better leverage of the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail was suggested – more stop overs. Increase in accommodation options up the valley. Lack of an effective on the ground link in Ōamaru for Twizel based operators was perceived as a barrier. No bike facilities at the end of the trail.

### Key barriers

A range of barriers were identified, the most notable being the lack of cohesiveness among interest groups to offer scale. There is no one organisation responsible for “connecting the dots” across stakeholders and developing an overarching Heritage & Culture strategy, nor leadership towards

aligned goals. The diversity of experiences, stories, and opportunities across Waitaki is a key barrier. “We can’t do it all”. Today they are “weirdly separate”.

Colonial history thwarting Māori history was highlighted as inhibiting the promotion of Ngāi Tahu heritage and stories in the district.

Lack of funding, time, commercial sensitivities, negative local attitudes, other priorities, and a reliance on volunteers is inhibiting effective leverage of our assets. Lack of communication and co-ordination across groups (e.g., for events) is also causing frustration.

### **If you were introducing new visitors to the district’s rich past, what key stories would you share and why?**

A plethora of stories was identified and a desire for “real stories about real characters that built the economy and made us who we are”. The innovative manufacturers, engineers, and farmers who developed the town, grain and wool farming; the first settlers; the early Maori settlements and journeys; the role of water, irrigation, engineering and hydroelectricity amongst others.

Maori<sup>people</sup> farming<sup>Development</sup> Oamaru limestone<sup>Waitaha</sup>  
heritage<sup>etc</sup> Oamaru<sup>town</sup> stories<sup>early</sup>  
frozen meat<sup>building</sup> history<sup>Victorian</sup> district<sup>Totara Estate</sup>  
export<sup>story first</sup> land

### **Breakout 3 - How can we best tell and share our stories? What is the role of new technology?**

- People tell stories – word of mouth. It’s about the people that have the personality, passion and the humour to deliver.
- Delivery should be by younger and older people and stories should be tailored to the target audience e.g., geological timeframes and dates can be a bore to the masses.
- Ensure stories are compelling and engaging, include some of the “underbelly” lesser- known stories aligned to the district’s identity.
- Live our stories – invite someone who is living the story to tell it.
- Sell “story telling” to local businesses as a value proposition.
- Tell the story of our food/geo-gastronomy – Waitaki grown. Ringfence Waitaki produce and promote buy and serve local. Cafés and restaurant’s one dish a week – Waitaki produce + local beverage.
- Encourage interaction between key stakeholder groups. Groups need to agree who is leading this and who will be responsible for implementation.

New technology is a tool but doesn’t replace people. Technology depends on the audience. Ask them what they would like.

- Develop a hierarchy of story-telling – spark an interest and send people to discover more.
- Use maps, photos, visual, audio – print and digital. Leverage the archives, City/church information.
- Leverage existing resources, experts, and knowledgeable people. There is plenty written and recorded to date.

### Proposed Delivery methods

Pay people to write and educate about the stories and offer experiences. Understanding cost structure to return a profit from the experience should be explored.

Information Centres /Virtual information centre

- Staffed with knowledgeable, passionate, and valued staff.
- Maps and brochures available targeted to specific passions and interests

Interactive touch screens - Cf Toitu (Early settlers), Dunedin

Apps – revenue generating (not limited to young people)

- Location descriptions (GPS)
- Downloadable “podcasts” of stories
- Audio books/trails. Heritage Trails within the settlements could be a unique way of engaging with younger visitors (turning these into apps or a passport) - “we’ll never know what history we’ll lose in the future.”

QR codes on buildings, maps, brochures, and on story boards throughout the district

### **What events and experiences might be developed to better leverage our built and cultural heritage?**

Nine event and experiences were ranked by respondents. A vintage car rally and music festival received the highest ratings. Heritage tours and Rūnaka/Iwi experiences were most polarising.

Overall, it was felt current signature events could be better leveraged and modernised through enhanced collaboration e.g. Retailers changing opening hours during events. There’s “massive potential here”. Events could be “clustered together.” Overall needs vision and participation.

Keep it small and do it well. Publicly thank organisers.

Other events proposed included a Mid-winter festival/ Christmas possibly linked to Matariki. A masked carnival; lighting across Oamaru to the North End. Stalls selling mulled wine, stollen etc. Collaboration required across numerous stakeholders – Council, RTO, businesses etc.

Opportunity to strengthen Victorian Heritage Festival and evolve to 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moonlight promenade/ dress ups etc.

Chorus Box Art tour – a walking tour around the “art enhanced” chorus boxes.

Train trips (leveraging success of Pounamu Travel/ Pukekohe and other providers). Short passenger links north and south of Ōamaru.

National sporting events; Leveraging our Pasifika community - Tongan festival; Train tours from Palmerston (themed food and wine or could tie in with music events, rugby events); stone sawing championships; NZ Penny Farthing & Veteran Cycle Championships; Palmerston Planet – every activity centres on the letter P. Enough for a year. Matariki and the new public holiday presents a key opportunity moving forward leveraging Waitaki’s “dark skies” and to promote Ngāi Tahu stories.

An opportunity to promote Waitaki as the “folly destination of the world” was tabled and well received. A nationwide folly competition was proposed. A location in the district would be offered to an individual, group, or business to create a folly. Other regions would be encouraged to participate

too. Photos would be shared, and a “champion” nominated. Over time, follies would be created across the district leveraging our unique landscape, geology, artistic spirit, and quirky personality.