

Hon Stuart Nash

Minister of Tourism



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PĀNUI PĀPĀHO
MEDIA STATEMENT

Support, recovery and re-set plan for tourism communities

- Five South Island tourist communities targeted for specialist support
- Pressure on Māori tourism operators and Conservation facilities recognised
- Domestic and international-facing tourism agencies put on more secure footing
- Long-term plan to re-set tourism with a focus on sustainability, industry standards and regional economic diversification

A plan to ensure the immediate survival and long-term transformation of the tourism sector has been outlined by the Minister of Tourism.

Stuart Nash told the industry's annual TRENZ conference an all-of-government plan will support the recovery of tourism communities after the impacts of COVID19, and rebuild tourism on a more sustainable foundation for the future.

"The economic impact of the loss of international visitors is felt beyond the tourism workforce and businesses," Mr Nash said. "Whole communities, especially in five South Island regions, are facing new challenges to their way of life.

"At the same time, reviews by agencies like the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, the Climate Change Commission, and the Tourism Futures Taskforce have highlighted transformation is required to rebuild tourism for the future.

"We will roll out a \$200 million *Tourism Communities: Support, Recovery and Re-set Plan* between now and 2023. It will invest in new programmes like small business support, tourism infrastructure, the conservation estate, Māori development, economic and regional development, and mental wellbeing support.

"There are 12 key points in the *Tourism Communities Plan*. Half are focused on the most vulnerable South Island regions: Fiordland, South Westland, Queenstown Lakes, Mackenzie District and Kaikōura. The remaining six are nationwide initiatives.

"I have [already signalled](#) that long-term structural change and short-term targeted support must prioritise the regions and communities who need most help," Mr Nash said. Support for the five South Island communities will address:

1. psychological and social wellbeing support and training (\$4.5 million)
2. grants for businesses to get expert advice on planning and decision-making in response to COVID-19 (\$10 million total, \$5,000 per business)

3. grants to help businesses implement these plans and advice (\$10 million, \$5,000 per business)
4. A kick-start fund so businesses that have gone into hibernation or suspended operations can receive grants to help reopen and resume trading once international visitors return (\$49 million)
5. Support to diversify and re-set the Queenstown-Wanaka regional economy with a \$20 million fund, to help develop alternative industries and attract private sector investment. The area is over-reliant on international tourism, and needs support to improve its resilience to global economic shocks. Government support will be through an underwriting role. Potential projects include a digital innovation hub and a film studio.
6. Tourism at the iconic UNESCO World Heritage site Milford Sound-Piopiotahi cannot return to its pre-COVID state. Significant pressure from 870,000 annual visitors undermines cultural and environmental values and infrastructure in Fiordland National Park. Transformation is needed to protect Milford Sound-Piopiotahi and create a more sustainable and high quality visitor experience. \$15 million will enable the Milford Opportunities Project to move to its next phase. This requires detailed planning, community consultation, consenting, and preparation for new infrastructure.

“The *Tourism Communities Plan* also offers wide support for the industry as a whole. It is an opportunity for government, councils, iwi, businesses and tourism communities to work together and re-set the industry on a more sustainable model for the future.

“There are six additional components of the plan to address longer-term challenges,” Mr Nash said. These will support a recovery and re-set as follows:

7. Regional Tourism Organisations will receive a new round of annual grant funding of \$26 million to manage, plan, promote and market tourism activities in their regions. The surge in domestic tourism in the past year has been a boost for some traditionally out-of-the-way regions, and the new investment will build on this.
8. Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs) provide a vital link to global markets and need to be ready to facilitate the return of international visitors when it is safe to do so. \$14 million in existing loans from the 2020 Tourism Recovery Package will be able to be converted to grants. This means 26 ITOs may receive up to \$500,000 each.
9. Some Māori tourism businesses have experienced a severe downturn with the absence of international visitors and will be targeted for support. Funding will be managed by New Zealand Māori Tourism who will also expand their business support services. The investment will help the Māori tourism industry position for the future. The Minister for Māori Development will announce details next month.
10. The Department of Conservation will extend the fee waiver for around 1,000 operators on public conservation land who pay a tourism concession fee. An extra \$10 million allows tourism concession fees to be waived for a further six months. It will ensure important work on conservation and recreational facilities continues despite the loss of revenue. It also enables tourism jobs and businesses to remain active in the Conservation estate.
11. Local councils can apply to another round of the Tourism Infrastructure Fund, with \$16.5 million of new investment. Many councils with small rating bases use the fund to help develop tourism assets like carparks, toilet blocks, waste disposal facilities, and cycle paths.
12. A new Tourism Industry Transformation Plan (ITP) will see the government work in partnership with tourism businesses and the tourism workforce, councils, iwi,

researchers and independent advisers. The ITP will be developed with \$10 million in new funding. It will build on recent work by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Tourism Futures Taskforce, Climate Change Commission, and others, to lift industry standards and transform to a more sustainable model.

The *Tourism Communities Plan* is funded through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. It includes approximately \$73 million returned and reprioritised from the 2020 Tourism Recovery Package, ensuring value for money and targeted support where it is needed most.

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