

\$1.27 million announced for regional tourism infrastructure projects

Tourism Minister Paula Bennett today announced \$1.27 million in government funding for six new tourism infrastructure projects across the Manawatū-Whanganui region.

Achieving successful applications through the Regional Mid-sized Tourism Facilities Grant Fund had been identified as an immediate priority within the Manawatū-Whanganui Economic Action Plan (Action Plan) under the Accelerate25 programme.

With visitor spending in the Manawatū-Whanganui up six percent to around \$939 million for the year to April*, tourism has been identified as one of nine opportunities to focus on in the Action Plan.

“This region has huge potential, we achieved fourth fastest growing region in the ASB regional economic scorecard**, and with numerous natural and cultural assets, including alpine and navigable river landscapes, the key is being able to provide the infrastructure to support a growing international and domestic tourism market,” says Accelerate25 Lead Team facilitator, Michael McCartney.

The successful projects from the Manawatū-Whanganui Region are:

- Horizons Regional Council – construction of new toilet facilities at each end of Te Apiti – Manawatū Gorge, \$105,800
- Rangitikei District Council – new toilets at three sites across the district (Mangaweka Village, Taihape and Hunterville), \$120,550
- Ruapehu District Council – construction of toilet facilities and parking at the Ohakune Carrot, \$622,500
- Ruapehu District Council – Tangiwai and Ameku Road (Raetihi) toilets, \$140,000
- Ruapehu District Council – Ohura toilets, \$140,000
- Ruapehu District Council – Owango toilets, \$140,000.

“It’s important to acknowledge the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment for making such an investment in our Region,” says Mr McCartney.

“I see it as a vote of confidence in the Accelerate25 programme and the work we are doing at a local government level. We look forward to this continued support from central government as we endeavor to build a suitable infrastructure for our burgeoning tourist numbers.”

Rangitikei Mayor Andy Watson is thrilled with the announcement.

“This is great news for our region as we want to provide facilities that are fit for purpose, have a unique design and are accessible,” he says.

Ruapehu Mayor Don Cameron noted that investment made by central government was a clear commitment to the future of Ruapehu tourism.

“This funding is important in creating jobs, lifting incomes and providing opportunities for Ruapehu communities,” he says.

Te Apiti – Manawatū Gorge Governance Group and Horizons Regional Council Chair Bruce Gordon noted the new toilet facilities will cater for visitor numbers which have increased by more than 350 per cent since 2012.

“New facilities were much needed not only at Te Apiti, but also in other locations around the region,” he says.

“So receiving this support is hugely important as we work towards creating a successful tourism sector, enhancing experiences for visitors to all corners of our stunning Region.”

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Notes to editor:

*The latest tourism spend statistics can be found at <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/sectors-industries/tourism/tourism-research-data/monthly-regional-tourism-estimates/annual-spend-grouped-by-region-country-of-origin-and-product-category>

**The ASB regional economic scorecard can be found at <https://www.asb.co.nz/content/dam/asb/documents/reports/asb-regional-economic-scoreboard/Scoreboard%20Q1%202017.pdf>