

A note from the Chairman

By Grant Lilly, TIA Chairman – 18 March 2016

Local government and infrastructure needs are two extremely important topics for our tourism industry right now.

So it was appropriate that your TIA board devoted a large part of our recent meeting to discussing these areas and what influence we can bring to bear in order to enhance tourism's value to New Zealand.

Local government elections are coming up in October and we were keen to consider what should be included in a Tourism Election Manifesto that we would take to council candidates and council officers.

We know the growth in visitor arrivals has put pressure on some of our most popular destinations, with some communities struggling to pay for the water or sewage schemes that they need. The management of freedom camping has also created issues in some areas.

We were delighted to welcome Local Government New Zealand president Lawrence Yule to address our meeting, accompanied by LGNZ's Tourism Group Chairman David Hammond. We enjoyed a stimulating and enlightening debate on how local government views tourism and how we can help change the environment so they will see tourism as an opportunity, not a problem.

An immediate outcome is that TIA has been invited to join LGNZ on a project to look at infrastructure funding issues, with the aim of finding workable funding solutions that we can take to central government.

Your Board sees this as an opportunity to explore innovative funding models that we can put forward as an alternative to the default call for more visitor levies or bed taxes.

Your Board also reviewed TIA's draft Business Plan for 2016-17. We are asking the team to lead, co-ordinate and contribute to a significant body of work that identifies:

The key tourism infrastructure needs in the short, medium and long term

The scale of those infrastructure needs

The location and timing of those key infrastructure needs

Barriers to investment and options for removing those barriers

New funding models and policy settings.

It's crucial that tourism operators, central and local government can make informed decisions to invest in new tourism infrastructure, supported by removal of unnecessary red tape and greater facilitation of new projects.

These are big issues but we are confident that we can make a real difference.

We've enjoyed an incredibly strong summer, now it's time to put in the effort to ensure we can manage continuing growth in pursuit of our Tourism 2025 goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year.