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Media Release

Tourism industry calls for debate on user charges to fund DOC

It's time for a national debate on charging for access to attractions on the conservation estate, according to Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

The Tai Poutini West Coast Growth Study released by the Government this week highlights tourism as a key opportunity for economic development on the West Coast. But it notes that a new mix of funding options and mechanisms, such as charging visitors for experiences on conservation land, is needed to capitalise on the tourism opportunity.

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says this is a debate the tourism industry is keen to have.

"This is not about stopping the 'free and unfettered access' that is enshrined in the Conservation Act, but providing the Department of Conservation with the tools to collect revenue to maintain and enhance the facilities it provides," Mr Roberts says.

There has been much discussion recently about taxing our visitors more heavily to fund infrastructure demands created by the growth of the industry. But international visitors are already more than paying their way through GST (almost \$930 million a year) and other levies.

"There are a range of possible solutions to specific funding issues and in TIA's view, the introduction of more user charges for conservation land are well worth exploring," Mr Roberts says.

"DOC already charges for the use of built infrastructure like huts and camp sites. But as the Tai Poutini West Coast Growth Study points out, there is scope for more user-pays charges to support improved maintenance, facilities and experiences at conservation estate attractions."

Many of the conservation attractions on the West Coast are free and generate no revenue to assist in their maintenance.

The report states that international experience shows that people are willing to pay where it leads to better experiences and when it's clear the fees are being used in the local area.

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“This is an idea whose time has come. Through its **Tourism 2025** growth framework, the tourism industry has set an ambitious goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year,” Mr Roberts says.

“Our conservation estate is a critical part of our growth strategy, helping attract international visitors, as well as being enjoyed by numerous New Zealanders. The tourism industry wants to be part of the solution to finding sustainable ways to fund the conservation estate, so it can continue to be enjoyed by generations to come.”

See pg 106-107 of the **Tai Poutini West Coast Growth Study** for discussion on the suggestion of user charges for experiences on conservation land.

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KEY FACTS

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- Tourism in New Zealand is an \$81.6 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$32 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$49 million in economic activity every day
- Tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries, earning \$11.8 billion or 17.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2015)
- 12.1% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 295,908 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.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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