Boosting Tourism
**Boosting Tourism**

A National Government will support the struggling tourism sector by investing in regional events, delivering critical infrastructure, and improving access to staff.

Before the pandemic, tourism employed around 220,000 people or 8 per cent of the New Zealand workforce.¹ Tourism was New Zealand's largest export earner, with $17.7 billion in export revenue.² But the pandemic took 85,000 jobs from tourism and over 90 per cent of international revenue.³ More than a year after the borders reopened, international visitor numbers have still not fully recovered.

New Zealand's prosperity depends on increasing export revenues from international visitors.⁴ But tourism's benefits go beyond spending and exports. Tourism creates connections. A recent survey suggests 72 per cent of visitors to New Zealand are highly likely to recommend New Zealand to others.⁵

Under Labour, New Zealand is in recession, the cost-of-living continues to rise faster than wages, food prices are at a record high, and mortgages and rents are unaffordable. Boosting tourism is part of National's plan to rebuild the economy so New Zealanders get ahead.

A working economy means an end to the cost-of-living crisis. A strong economy means higher incomes, lower mortgage rates, and it means New Zealand can also afford the quality public services we all rely on.

National will deliver practical and sensible support to make our beautiful country even more attractive to visitors, so tourism operators – including those in the regions – can get on with delivering world-class experiences and hospitality, and growing their businesses and the economy.

**National's plan to boost tourism**

1. A new Great Walk at Waiau-Toa/Molesworth in Canterbury to attract more visitors to this special part of New Zealand.
2. E-chargers on the NZ Cycle Trail to make it accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels.
3. Longer term DoC concessions to provide certainty for tourist operators to invest in unique experiences on the DoC estate.
4. Better access to workers with more flexible working holiday visas and fast visa processing.
5. Contestable funding to support the promotion of regional events outside major tourist destinations.
6. Delivering critical infrastructure – like roads, housing and an EV charging network – to allow tourism to grow sustainably without overwhelming local communities.

³Based on the change in the Tourism Satellite Account between years ended March 2019 and March 2022.
⁴According to the OECD for the first quarter of 2023 as at 30 June 2023, [link](#).
⁵MBIE, International Visitor Survey, June 2023, [link](#).
Boosting Tourism

National wants more tourists visiting New Zealand and the infrastructure and workforce needed to support them. International tourism is a major source of export revenue, while domestic and international tourism supports businesses and local communities across the entire economy.

Boosting the tourism sector is part of National’s plan to rebuild the economy to get it working for all New Zealanders.

1. A new Great Walk

New Zealanders and visitors have long cherished the ten existing Great Walks managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC). To build on this legacy, National will establish a new Great Walk at Waiau-Toa/Molesworth in Canterbury so Kiwis and international visitors alike can enjoy more of New Zealand’s unparalleled natural beauty.

National will upgrade the walking track and facilities along the existing Waiau-Toa/Molesworth trail to deliver an 80 kilometre Great Walk in this unique part of the country.

2. Electrify the New Zealand Cycle Trail

National launched what was then-called the New Zealand Cycleway in 2009. Since then, it has grown into a world-class network of cycle trails around the country. The network – since renamed as the New Zealand Cycle Trail – is enjoyed by thousands of tourists and locals alike each year.

With advancements in e-bike technology in recent years, the New Zealand Cycle Trail is becoming accessible to more people of various ages and fitness levels. National will support this trend and continue to improve access to the cycleway network by investing in e-bike charging stations on cycle trails around the country, including black spots.

National will contribute up to $3 million in co-investment by agreement with local councils to boost e-bike charging infrastructure to improve accessibility to the New Zealand Cycle Trail. This will support the installation of up to 120 solar-powered e-bike charging stations.

To ensure charging stations are adequately maintained once built, National will review how annual funding for the New Zealand Cycle Trail is divided between maintenance, development and promotion.
3. Fix DoC concessions to provide certainty for tourist operators

Many tourism businesses operate on Department of Conservation (DoC) land – such as guiding, aviation and ski areas – under a DoC concession. The concessions system is widely seen as cumbersome and difficult to navigate.

Long delays for renewing concessions and inconsistent decisions are creating significant uncertainty for tourism operators. Tourism operators struggle to make long-term investments to grow their businesses if they cannot be sure their concession will be renewed.

To address this and give tourist operators more certainty and confidence to invest, National will require DoC to make concession decisions within one year, while concessions must be issued for a minimum of five years with a right of renewal. Exceptions will be allowed in limited cases where there are environmental risks or Treaty of Waitangi concerns.

Longer term concessions will mean more investment, more jobs and better experiences for domestic and international tourists.

4. Better access to workers

Tourism and hospitality have been especially affected by worker shortages. The sector has a large proportion of short-term, part-time, shift work and weekend roles and the work is highly seasonal. Tourism businesses depend on access to temporary and permanent migrants to provide both domestic and international tourists with the world-class experiences and hospitality they expect.

The Government’s attempts to overhaul the immigration system have been a disaster for sectors like tourism, while requirements for migrant workers in most tourism occupations to be paid at least 95 percent of the median wage will push many operators to the brink.

National will ensure businesses in the tourism sector can get access to the staff they need so they can continue to operate and deliver visitors the world-class experiences and hospitality New Zealand is known for.

National will:

- Lift the upper age to apply for a Working Holiday Visa to New Zealand from 30 to 35 for all eligible countries.
- Allow people from eligible countries to apply for a second or third Working Holiday Visa if they work in areas of worker shortages like tourism.
- Introduce a priority processing service to allow migrants and businesses to fast-track visa applications.
- Scrap the median wage requirement and let businesses in sectors like tourism attract the staff they need at a wage that reflects their skills and experience.

5. Funding to promote regional events

National wants to see tourism develop around the country to help support local businesses, jobs and communities. It is important that we showcase the whole country rather than focus on a few tourist hotspots.

To encourage more tourists to visit different parts of the country, National will establish a $5 million contestable fund to support Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) to better promote regional events outside of our traditional major tourist destinations.

Funding will be allocated on criteria that includes a high return on investment and likelihood of encouraging travellers to explore more of what New Zealand has to offer beyond tourist hotspots.
6. Delivering critical infrastructure to reduce pressure on tourist hotspots

Funding infrastructure can be a problem for councils in areas with large numbers of tourists relative to the number of ratepaying residents.

National’s comprehensive plans for infrastructure funding and finance are designed to give councils new ways to fund infrastructure including in tourist hotspots.

As part of National's City and Regional Deals model, we will task the new National Infrastructure Agency to work with local councils to ensure destinations with high visitor numbers but low ratepayer bases can access the funding they need to support tourism infrastructure. This approach will deliver a new partnership between central and local government to help resolve longstanding tourism infrastructure problems.

National has also announced a range of policies to build infrastructure that will allow tourism to grow, supporting local economies without negatively impacting local communities.

**National’s infrastructure policies include:**

- **Transport for the Future** which invests in roads and public transport to tackle congestion and reduce travel times including in tourist areas.
- **Going for Housing Growth** requires councils to release 30 years of developable land for housing, taking pressure of scarce housing in popular tourist destinations.
- **Better Building and Construction** makes it faster and easier to build affordable, high-quality homes.
- **Electrify NZ** will unleash investment in renewable energy as well as transmission and lines, to support the shift to lower emissions transport.
- **Local Water Done Well** supports councils to fund investment in water infrastructure to accommodate growing demand.
- **Supercharging EV infrastructure** will deliver a nationwide network of 10,000 public EV chargers which will help drive an increase in the share of EVs in the rental car fleet for lower emissions from tourism and make New Zealand a more attractive destination for tourists who want to reduce their carbon footprint.

**Cost**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY24/25</th>
<th>FY25/26</th>
<th>FY26/27</th>
<th>FY27/28</th>
<th>Four-year total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Walk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-chargers on the NZ Cycle Trail</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional events promotion</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Funding for these initiatives will come from unallocated revenue raised by the Conservation and Tourism components of the International Visitor Levy.