



Hanmer Springs Business Association Inc

Submission on Hurunui Tourism Draft Strategy 2017 – 2022

The Hanmer Springs Business Association (HSBA) is an incorporated society which represents over 65 businesses in Hanmer Springs and has been doing so for over 25 years. The purpose of the HSBA is to support local Hanmer business people and help them realise profitable and balanced life styles by providing mentoring, advocacy and marketing. Marketing is through the Visit Hanmer Springs website, the HSBA Facebook page and through the Hurunui Official Visitor Guide (OVG).

Hanmer Springs businesses pay the Targeted Tourism Rate (TTR) levied by the Hurunui District Council (HDC). Hanmer Springs contributes 74% of the TTR fund for the entire Hurunui region. However the return to Hanmer Springs from this investment is 52% which is a concern. The HSBA would like to see a better balance between Hanmer Springs' TTR contribution to council and investment back into tourism infrastructure in Hanmer Springs going forward.

In terms of the Hurunui Tourism draft strategy itself, this document presents a strong vision for the future of tourism in the Hurunui region and Hanmer Springs. This document has been well received by the HSBA and the initial response from the committee has been very positive. The HSBA agrees with the positive direction and proposed ideas in the draft strategy to achieve growth in tourism in the region.

Summary of the HSBA's position on key elements in the draft strategy are as follows:

1. Driving growth of tourism in the Hurunui region

The HSBA fully supports driving tourism growth in the Hurunui region and agrees that this should be the main focus of the Hurunui Tourism strategy. We recognise that tourism is booming in NZ and most regions are experiencing significant growth. However Hurunui sits well below recognised tourism destinations such as Queenstown and Tekapo and is below the national average for tourism growth.

The HSBA wants to see Hanmer Springs and the Hurunui region achieve positive tourism growth above the national average by 2022 – or sooner – and believes that the Hurunui Tourism draft strategy is the first step towards this goal.

Maintaining fundamental infrastructure will be critical to ensuring positive tourism reviews of Hanmer Springs and the Hurunui as a destination in the future. Allocation should be made to ensure constant upgrading of infrastructure such as water services, broadband, road access, electrical service, etc.

2. Leverage off existing tourist routes

Hanmer Springs is already well established as a tourism destination for the domestic market in NZ with attractions such as Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools, Thrillseekers and Hanmer Adventure. Post-EQ we have seen an influx in international visitors to Hanmer Springs who have not been able to access Kaikoura. This has increased the visibility of Hanmer Springs to international markets and we need to take advantage of this exposure to cement Hanmer Springs as a destination for international visitors going forward.

The HSBA believes that investment in tourism products should be based in and around Hanmer Springs to give Hanmer Springs a larger presence and allow it to compete with other well established tourism destinations such as Tekapo and Queenstown. The view of the HSBA is that the overall focus of Hurunui Tourism should be to promote the Hurunui region by using Hanmer Springs as the hub from which visitors can explore the Hurunui region as well as Kaikoura and the West Coast. Hanmer Springs would then become the “crossroads” of the Top of the South Island (TOTS) and be an integral part of future travel across the north of the South Island. Increased focus on Hanmer Springs would bring increased benefit to the Hurunui region as a whole.

Developing touring routes through the Hurunui district will bring benefit to the entire region. The existing Alpine Pacific Triangle touring route (Christchurch-Kaikoura-Hanmer-Christchurch) has been promoted to international visitors over time and while it’s not operating at 100% at the moment, the HSBA feels that this touring route has the potential to compete with Christchurch-Tekapo-Queenstown route in the future. With significant investment in tourism we believe that a “Coast-to-coast” touring route from Kaikoura to Hanmer Springs to Greymouth and beyond will also become a major tourist attraction.

3. Destination Development

We agree with the proposal in the draft strategy to bring 20 new visitor experiences to the Hurunui region by 2022 which will drive tourism growth. The suggestion of a “seeding” system whereby Hurunui Tourism invests in a new product and then levies a tax to recoup the initial investment has merit. However the HSBA feels that establishing 2 leading national brands in the region will bring more growth more quickly and should be the preferred approach to growing tourism in the region.

Kaikoura has well recognised attractions such as Whale Watch, Dolphin Adventure and seal encounters which attract international visitors. These “export ready” products are easy to sell to

international visitors and are the sort of attractions that will bring strong growth in tourism. We feel that developing similar large scale products will bring greater numbers of visitors to the region.

Regarding the draft strategy document itself, on page 16 under “Taste” the HSBA feels that “retail experience-dining” could be added under “Taste” to give this development area more substance. Also under “Relax & Revive” area, we feel that “Health Treatments” would fit well in this area.

The HSBA would like to forge a strong partnership with Hurunui Tourism to help it achieve its strategy goals. We would like to suggest regular meetings with Hurunui Tourism to be able to offer advice and feedback on possible product development.

4. St James Cycle Way

The HSBA agrees that the St James Cycleway is an attraction that could be relatively easily developed to grow tourism to the region. An investment of \$2.3M to link the St James Cycleway to Hanmer Springs and the wider NZ Cycle trail would capitalise on the growing interest in cycle touring (cu: the success of the Otago Cycle trail).

The development of the St James Cycle way and surrounding cycle paths would require ongoing maintenance to keep it to required standards, so allowance for ongoing maintenance should be allowed in future budgets. Otherwise a partnership with a commercial operator may be required to provide the necessary funding and commitment to ensure the future standard of the cycle trails.

5. Destination Marketing

The HSBA agrees with the proposals in the draft strategy to create a more sales-based focus for the Hurunui region. Development of existing marketing assets will be key to achieving the goals here. We understand that Hurunui Tourism will want to develop the Visit Hurunui website to drive more sales for the region. However, we believe that the Visit Hanmer Springs website has greater potential to quickly grow sales across the Hurunui district. It currently has a lot more traffic because of its widely recognised brand and it’s position attached to the HSTPS website. The HSBA would be happy to work with Hurunui Tourism to develop the Visit Hanmer Springs website to take advantage of this potential.

The HSBA also has a Facebook page which is tracking quite well and this asset (as well as the Visit Hanmer Springs website) would be key to promoting the Hanmer Springs and Hurunui brand. Again the HSBA would be keen to work with Hurunui Tourism to develop a brand strategy for these assets.

The HSBA agrees with the proposal to focus on targeting key markets, particularly international visitors and conference and incentive markets. Bringing more conferences to the region will help to drive mid-week business which is a key focus area for off-peak business.

6. KPIs

The HSBA agrees with the 6 Key Performance Measures outlined on page 17 in the draft strategy to be Achieved by 2022. The HSBA would like to see more specific financial measures of success other than just relying on the MBIE spend figures. We agree with the examples of more specific KPIs given in the submission from the Accommodation Providers Group from Hanmer Springs.

7. Funding

The HSBA has noted the incremental increase in spending year on year from 2017-2022 to achieve the strategy goals. As stated above, Hanmer Springs contributes the bulk of funding from the Targeted Tourism Tax for the Hurunui region but funding for tourism development in the past has been inadequate. We would like clarification on where the majority of the funding for the draft tourism strategy 2017-2022 will be coming from.

8. Summary

In summary the HSBA agrees with the approach taken by Hurunui Tourism in the draft strategy for 2017-2022. It is a positive strategy which focuses on the two key areas that will make a difference to tourism in Hanmer Springs and the Hurunui region: Destination Management and Destination Marketing. The breakdown of what Hurunui Tourism wants to achieve and the existing products and attractions that can be developed show that a lot of thought has gone into this strategy.

The HSBA feels that the overarching Key Performance Measures are valuable and achievable targets which will produce excellent results if they can be achieved and maintained. We do feel that there does need to be more specific KPIs to measure results “at the coal face” and to be able to track real progress in terms of tourism growth as it occurs. Growing tourism numbers (both visitors and spend) will determine how successful the implementation of the strategy has been.

The HSBA will encourage and support this draft strategy and is keen to work closely with Hurunui Tourism to achieve our shared objectives of growing tourism to Hanmer Springs and the Hurunui region as a whole.



Christian Chester – Chair (Hanmer Springs Business Association)