



Puhoi to Pakiri Region

Visitor Strategy 2012 - 2017

Developed in partnership with the

Puhoi to Pakiri Steering Committee

Auckland Tourism Events & Economic Development (ATEED)
Auckland Council

The New Zealand Tourism Research Institute
AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand
www.nztri.org

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Introduction

In July 2010, Rodney District Council (RDC), and tourism stakeholders in the Puhoi to Pakiri (P2P) area of New Zealand, commissioned the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at AUT University (NZTRI) to develop a five-year strategic tourism development plan. The focus of the Visitor Strategy (2012-17), and the visitor research programme that underpins it, is on enhancing visitor yield, increasing the profitability and sustainability of the tourism industry, increasing collaboration between stakeholders, and on engaging stakeholders in developing destination potential. It is a regional plan, focused on developing regional and local competitiveness through partnerships between key stakeholders.

The Puhoi to Pakiri Region has much to offer as a tourist destination. Tourism creates jobs, generates income and can attract investment from external sources. Well-managed tourism can also enhance the environment, enrich communities and improve individual quality of life. This Visitor Strategy is the result of an extensive research and strategy formulation process. It presents a vision for the development of a sustainable, high yield, tourism sector in the region and a set of key actions for implementing this vision.

This is a strategy for a region that does not exist in terms of discrete political boundaries and is designed to guide a coordinating body that does not have any official jurisdictional or policy making role. The Strategy must work within a series of constraints and related opportunities:

1. The lack of political boundaries and distinct representation. This makes it difficult for voices to be heard – but opens up opportunities for business and community led efforts to increase awareness of the region’s needs.
2. A relative lack of financial and human resourcing – this is not a strategy that focuses on spending large amounts of money – it emphasises a realistic set of cost-effective solutions that can enable the region to chart a path forward in rather uncertain economic times, a path that will lead to stronger business performance, enhanced quality of life for residents and effectively dovetail with broader tourism and economic development strategies.
3. The diverse mix of communities and range of attractions showcased by the region provide great opportunities for the creation of a range of customised visitor experiences. At the same time the diverse nature of the region can also lead to a lack of cohesion and common purpose, something that has been highlighted by previous regional strategies. A central theme of this Strategy is, therefore, collaboration. It is based on the recognition that businesses and the broader community need to network and share resources to enable more effective competition in regional, national and international markets and to provide a quality, high-yield product for visitors.

The Strategy is designed to provide benefits for the range of stakeholders that are involved in tourism:

- For the **businesses** that develop and provide of tourism goods and services, the Strategy offers a series of cost-effective approaches to maximise the benefits of regional collaboration, increase visitor yield, and enhance regional responsiveness;
- For **community** there is the opportunity to play an increased role in the planning of future visitor industry development, to be more aware of the issues associated with the industry, to become a more active element of the visitor experience and to benefit from extra revenue and job creation;
- For **visitors and tourists** the Strategy offers the opportunity to gain more information before arrival, greater ability to interact with those providing tourism products and with the broader community, and the opportunity to get more out of their experience;
- For the **Council and those that plan tourism related activities and infrastructure**, there is the prospect of a coordinated approach between different stakeholder groups to develop a vital component of the economy through a strategy focussed on economic yield and environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The Strategy is designed to support and compliment other policy initiatives.

This Strategy is based on three major sources of information. The first is a review of relevant studies on tourism and economic development/planning in the region and the areas that comprise it (Appendix 1). The second is a research programme which included three surveys: business, community and visitor. These surveys are the subject of the Puhoi to Pakiri Visitor Strategy Research Programme - Final Report, July 2011 (see www.regionalsurveys.co.nz). The Report draws on eight months of online survey data collected from 16 August 2010 to 30 April 2011. The report is based on 752 Visitor Surveys (covering 1746 individuals), 286 Community Survey responses and 149 business responses. This data provides a 'decision support system' that enables the development of an evidence-based strategy. The final source of information is global in nature and stems from our knowledge of tourism planning and development processes in communities, regions and nations around the world, allowing us to benchmark this Strategy against international best practice.

The Strategy document commences with a brief review of the current context within which the Region is situated. We examine the global, regional and local dynamics that are playing some role in influencing the area.

A broad and encompassing vision statement is then presented to guide the focus of the Strategy. The statement is based on the dominant themes that have emerged from the community, business and tourism research conducted since mid 2010. The focus is on what can be called 'slow tourism' an approach that encourages greater interaction between the visitor and their

surroundings, supports and enhances community quality of life, builds profitable businesses and creates opportunities for the sustained economic development of future generations.

The document then focuses on the implementation of this vision, beginning with a discussion of the governance mechanism and structure that is needed to move the Strategy forward. The focus then shifts to the important role of information provision for visitor, community and business. The discussion on visitor information highlights the need for pre, during and post visit information provision.

The Strategy then focuses on building visitor experience (and yield) with an emphasis on adding further dimensions to an already successful visitor industry. The need for visitors to be 'slowed down' with a focus on customised experiences is further outlined. At the heart of a stronger visitor experience lies the need for businesses to collaborate more effectively and to raise levels of service quality. The Strategy also examines the community related dimensions of the industry – highlighting implementation approaches that can increase community awareness of, and support for the industry, while also making community a more integral part of the visitor experience. The emphasis is not just on building visitor interaction but also creating interactive communities. Infrastructural issues are also addressed with a focus on the critical areas of traffic, parking and environmental protection.

The final section looks at the importance of Resilience and Responsiveness. The Strategy examines the importance of maintaining a decision support system that can be used to evaluate regional tourism performance over time – building on the legacy of the 2010/11 business, community and visitor survey research. This section of the Strategy also focuses on the importance of planning for and managing unforeseen crises and challenges.

The concluding sections of the document summarise the overall focus of the Strategy. A list of background reference material (Appendix 1) used to inform the report is then provided followed by an Appendix which outlines potential funding sources to support the initiatives presented in the Strategy (Appendix 2).

Puhoi to Pakiri: navigating change

The global tourism industry continues to grow but there are clearly shifts occurring in visitor flows and the nature of travel itself. China, India and Brazil represent expanding source markets for destinations around the world while, traditional long haul source markets such as the US and parts of Europe witness severe economic contraction. Challenging global conditions are also forcing governments around the world to look at domestic tourism through new eyes.

Visitor demand is also shifting, while mass package tourism continues to dominate much of the industry, many travellers are looking for unique and authentic experiences and opportunities to interact with their surroundings rather than simply observing them. There is a growing focus in tourism strategies around the world on maximising interactive opportunities for visitors – building and developing a sense of place, strengthening the visitor experience, and maximising economic yield associated with the industry. A focus on yield from a policy perspective also enables the crucial dimension of sustainability to be brought into the forefront. Without sustained economic growth and the sustenance of host quality of life the industry cannot thrive or, ultimately, survive.

Tourism continues to play a major economic role for New Zealand contributing 8.8% to GDP (MED, 2010). International arrival numbers to New Zealand have stagnated in recent years whereas domestic tourism has remained comparatively strong. For the year ended May 2011, there were 2.5 million **international visitor arrivals**, an increase of 1% on the previous year. The main purpose of visit was to 'holiday', or 'visit friends/relatives', and 'business'. The average intended length of stay was 19.8 days. Key markets were (in order) Australia, UK, USA, China and Japan (International Visitor Arrivals and Departures). The biggest change for the year was the UK market, with 28,585 (-11.4%) fewer visitors arriving into NZ in this period compared to the 12 months prior. Arrivals from China grew by 28,162 visitors (+27.5%). Total international visitor expenditure for the year ended March, 2011 was \$5.598 billion down \$367 million or 6.1% on the previous year. Average expenditure per person, per night was NZ\$112, and the average expenditure per person, per trip was NZ\$2,418 (MED, 2011ab).

For the year ended December 2010, there were 28.2 million **domestic** day trips taken, 16.0 million overnight trips giving a total of 47.4 million trips - a small 0.5% decrease in growth (total nights) over the previous year. The main purpose of visit was to 'holiday', 'visit friends/relatives', and 'business'. The total domestic spend of \$8,642 million was down 3% from the previous year. The average spend per day trip was \$107, the average spend per overnight trip was \$354 and the average spend per night was \$119 (MED, 2011c).

In January 2011, Tourism New Zealand unveiled a change to its successful '100% Pure New Zealand' marketing campaign, introducing a stronger focus on the individual experiences on offer and changing the popular '100% Pure' tagline, to '100% Pure You'. The new campaign focuses on the 'feeling' and benefits gained from a uniquely New Zealand experience.

Arrivals into Auckland grew by +3.1% (52,106 people) in the 12 months to May 2011. There were 26,923 extra visitors from China. Almost half of all arrivals were visiting NZ on holiday, with one third visiting friends or relatives (VFR). Domestic visitors spent 1,621,829 overnight trips (-13.5% on the PY) in Auckland in the year to March 2011. Forty-three percent of the visitors came to Auckland to see family and friends (MED, 2011ac).

International visitors to Auckland spent \$4.70 billion in the year to March 2011 (-2.2%). This downturn is a result of the negative economic situation in Auckland's key markets of the USA and the UK. Spend by Australian visitors is also down (-8.5%). Inbound tourism in Auckland contributed \$1.96 billion to the GDP and domestic tourism contributed \$1.23 billion. Export education (i.e. international students) contributed \$315 million to total tourism expenditure (approximately 7.6% of total tourism expenditure) in 2009 (ATEED, 2011c; Covec, 2010).

Rodney district hosted 513,000 commercial visitor nights in 2009 and captured a 5.5% share or \$176 million of total regional visitor expenditure excluding export education (Covec, 2010). Contributions of the Rodney District to the regional tourism GDP are estimated at 3% (ARC, 2009). It should be noted, of course, that tourism data collected for the Auckland Region, incorporating the urban area of Auckland City, does not accurately reflect the importance of the industry for the Puhoi to Pakiri area or the reasons for visitation.

Work to develop a Visitor Plan for the new Auckland 'Super City' commenced in April 2011 and is due for delivery in October 2011. The Auckland Visitor Plan will contribute to the preparation of the Council's overall Auckland Plan, infrastructure investment, and ATEED's delivery of regional tourism and major events operations. The Visitor Plan will be an integral component of ATEED's work to set the direction for the Auckland visitor economy. The intention is to have stronger integrated delivery across the three pillars of ATEED's business – tourism, events and business/sector development. The visitor strategy will include more detailed information on a range of topical demand and supply-side issues and opportunities. There will also be a stock-take of product and a matrix to show how product serves future market segments (ATEED, 2011b).

The Puhoi to Pakiri region is approximately 40 km north of Auckland City, stretching from Puhoi in the South and Warkworth in the centre, up to Pakiri in the North, covering large parts of what was previously eastern Rodney District (Figure 1). The area encompasses a number of smaller settlements such as Mahurangi, Snells Beach, Omaha Beach, Matakana, and Leigh, and smaller, largely uninhabited islands such as Kawau, Motuora or Goat Island. The area has experienced a steady increase in resident numbers in the past decade, with a population currently estimated at 30,000.

The Puhoi to Pakiri region's main transport gateway towards both southern and northern connections (Auckland City or Northland) is State Highway 1. The New Zealand Transport Agency is currently consulting on the proposed Puhoi to Wellsford 'Holiday Highway', due for completion in 2022. Due to the geological challenges of the project area, the NZTA has separated the new highway project between Northland and Auckland into two separate sections to allow the route

between Puhoi and Warkworth to continue while further investigations continue to the north: from Warkworth to Wellsford.

Figure 1. The study area: from Puhoi to Pakiri.



The natural and rural environment of the Puhoi to Pakiri region offers a wide variety of activities and experiences for both resident and tourist alike. Among other things, a long coastline, hills, woodlands, open space areas, boutique wineries and regular events such as farmers' markets, offer favourable surroundings for tourism and recreational activities. There are a number of Regional Parks and Reserves such as the Cape Rodney – Okakari Point Marine Reserve (also often referred to as the Goat Island Marine Reserve), the Tauwharanui Marine Park or the Long Bay – Okura Marine Reserve.

A range of (tourism-related) businesses can be found in the area; recent information shows 111 accommodation providers, 84 activities and 'places of interest' services, 47 food operations (such as cafés or restaurants), 36 arts & crafts businesses, 34 wineries and breweries, 14 wedding and 13 transport services as well as three advisory/information centres.

The physical environment and overall rural 'feel' of the region are key elements shaping the lifestyle of local communities. This lifestyle and the atmosphere it creates are highly valued by the residents and attractive to visitors. This implies that sustainable tourism development within the region needs to involve the community as well as tourism operators and be responsive to both sets of needs. The region faces the challenges associated with avoiding simply becoming a long distance dormitory suburb, growing job opportunities and maximising the economic opportunities that stem from being on the doorstep of a major city, while at the same time maintaining the quality of life and environment that attracts people to it in the first place.

The Region itself exists because it brings together, not always seamlessly, a rich array of resources that are of interest to visitors and that also meet the needs of long term residents and recent 'migrants' to the area. It is a region that has gone through significant political change in recent years. Within the area there are distinct pockets of visitor attractions and clearly defined communities. These distinct 'products' bring a diverse range of visitors – primarily domestic but with a healthy portion of international visitors as well. The communities themselves differ considerably and may sometimes struggle to see eye to eye, at the same time levels of business cooperation are relatively low.

Throughout this Strategy we stress the need for research to underpin decisions made on the future development of the industry. The development of appropriate tourism cannot be done without a comprehensive understanding of tourism and its effects, both positive and negative.

A Vision for Puhoi to Pakiri

Any discussion of a vision for Puhoi to Pakiri must first ask the question: is there logic and value in developing a regional focus for what some may argue is simply a disparate combination of communities, businesses and political structures?

The answer to this question, based on the findings of the research programme, is an emphatic yes. The research programme suggests that the typical visitor makes use of a range of amenities and products throughout the region as they complete their overall travel experience. The community and business surveys show that while people feel very connected to their own 'place'/community, they also have a feel for the broader importance of tourism and the value of building regional identity. It is clear however that collaboration and cooperation across the region need to be strengthened from existing levels. It is also clear that there is very real value in developing a brand for the region – however as we note in the action statements below this branding needs to be done carefully so as not to exclude or alienate regional stakeholders, and as part of broader online marketing and engagement initiatives (see Action 2).

To provide the Strategy with a broad and encompassing focus, the following vision statement has been developed based on an analysis of the feedback provided through the visitor, business and community surveys. The research revealed a diverse range of views and no one vision can capture every perspective – however the core themes to emerge are captured in the following statement.

The region provides visitor and resident experiences that draw on a unique mix of landscapes, coastline, world class amenities, lifestyle and heritage. Future development of a regional visitor industry will focus on 'slow tourism/visitation' - enhancing visitor yield in a way that supports sustainable economic development, and does not degrade community quality of life. The future planning of tourism will be underpinned with timely research.

The focus of the vision is on increasing yield per visitor. Every visitor – whether they are a young surf-bound day-tripper or a high spending overseas family staying for a week – can be encouraged to spend more if they are provided with the opportunities to interact with the people and environment that surrounds them. This entails development of greater product depth and enhanced networking between providers of visitor services. It also means that it is vital to provide the visitor with a greater sense of place – before they arrive as well as during their stay. It is an increase in visitor yield that can enable tourism to link more effectively to the core focus of this Strategy – creating sustained economic benefits for the region and its populace.

It is also vital to ensure that infrastructure be developed and/or enhanced to cope with the demands of the visitor industry and local population. Improvements in roads, parking, traffic

control and also the management of the general environment (litter etc), are critical to the sustained development of the visitor industry. These developments can then underpin the development of further infrastructure (cycle paths, walk ways, micro-trails) that can support and foster slower and more interactive forms of tourism and build community engagement.

This Visitor Strategy seeks to build on the emotional attachments to place that are formed by both visitors and residents. Our focus is on ensuring that for the visitor, fleeting moments and potentially missed opportunities can be captured and turned into lasting community economic benefits. For the local residents it is important to be able to see the benefits associated with the industry and to also feel that there is not a loss of control over the quality of life elements that led them to the region in the first place.

The Puhoi to Pakiri region is presented in this Strategy as a ‘slow tourism destination’, offering a more meaningful, interactive and ecologically friendly way to experience the region than through rushed visits that leave people thirsting for more but unable, or unsure, of how to meet their demands. There is a focus on value-for-money, ‘unique’ networked experiences designed for visitors to explore, relax, and slow down. Opportunities are created for visitors and community to interact. Slow tourism offers the visitor a deeper, more enriching visit by supporting them to grow a relationship to the region – to the natural environment and the people within it.

We now turn to the actions that can achieve this Vision.

A Strategy for Puhoi to Pakiri

Coordination and Governance

For the regional Visitor Strategy to be implemented it is essential that there be a body in place that can play a coordinating role. The research programme that informs this Strategy was guided and coordinated by a local Steering Committee of nine members comprising a range of sectoral and local interests within the region. Over time the Steering Committee has developed into a strong and relatively cohesive grouping. This Steering Committee, or some reshaped version of it, should play the ongoing role in implementing the Strategy that is outlined in this document. We recommend that an Incorporated Society be formed that is focused on implementing this Visitor Strategy.

Action 1: Formation of 'Puhoi to Pakiri Incorporated Society'

The Incorporated Society will be the face of a region that otherwise lacks a collective mouthpiece from a tourism and economic development perspective. It will liaise with other Associations, local promotions, business, tourism, and community groups; and develop links to schools and higher education, as well as relevant public agencies.

The Incorporated Society will have a standard board structure – chaired by an internally elected member. Representation would ideally provide a regional/sectoral spread but the overall focus of the organisation must be broadly regional rather than parochial. It is, however, important not to lose a sense of the importance of local place and identity within the region.

It is critical, where possible, that the members have strong links to broader stakeholder networks (e.g. industry associations, community groups). The Incorporated Society would also feature representation from Auckland Council (ATEED) and the broader community (one member from each suggested).

It is critical, for the success of the Strategy, that the Incorporated Society not be seen simply as a marketing body. The role of the Board must be to guide the development of a regional dimension to the current businesses and communities in the area and to help foster sustainable economic growth. The Board must focus on showing the value added associated with regional collaboration in marketing, product development, service development and so forth. If it can do this it will become a self-sustaining entity.

As time evolves it may be that special interest groups or sub-committees will evolve that reflect the various sectors that comprise the industry however in the initial phases we suggest that the focus be very much on building a 'sense of region'.

In addition to the Board we recommend the appointment of a **Regional Tourism Coordinator (RTC)**, who would focus on Strategy implementation, with a keen eye on sales and marketing, but also managing other aspects e.g. product development, liaison with ATEED, co-ordination and networking, and capability building.

The funding structure for the organisation depends heavily on the nature of the businesses in the region, and more specifically those who choose to become part of the group. We suggest a model that is funded by members on a sliding scale relative to revenue (and also potential in-kind contributions). The Incorporated Society would also focus on identifying and seeking funding from external sources.

The benefits of membership will include access to:

- a regional website, rich in local content, with listing and linkages provided plus the opportunity to make use of a 'put your business on the map' tool created in Google maps;
- a set of resources, on the website, relating to tourism research on industry performance in the region, with the ability over time to query data;
- a network of people who can provide mentoring, lobbying and a range of other support;
- seminars, regional awards and a range of other incentives that may be developed over time.

The Auckland Council/ATEED representative on the Board would act as an important conduit to broader city-wide initiatives and policies, reviewing Council's new strategies, plans and initiatives as they are released (e.g. Auckland Visitor Plan) and reporting implications back to the Board.

Implementation:

A. Puhoi to Pakiri Incorporated is registered, and a date set for the first AGM. Members of P2P Inc. include a representative from Auckland Council/ATEED and one person to represent the communities of the P2P area.

Timeframe: By 30 November 2011

Responsible: Led by the current Steering Committee, supported by Council /ATEED

B. A funding review and calendar with submission deadlines is created for potential sources of external funding e.g. Community grants, ASB Community Trust etc. Potential sources of internal funding are identified e.g. membership fees, Council contributions and potential in-kind contributions (e.g. equipment, catering, and venues).

Timeframe: By 30 November 2011 (updated quarterly)

Responsible: Initial review provided by the Incorporated Society, with initial NZTRI assistance (pro-bono), later reviews updated by the RTC

C. Appoint Regional Tourism Coordinator (RTC)

Timeframe: As soon as possible but no later than April 2012. Position performance reviewed regularly.

Responsible: Position description designed by the Incorporated Society with support from NZTRI (pro bono), funding provided by local industry, Council / ATEED.

Information Provision

Information lies at the heart of the tourism industry. It is the lifeblood of destinations, communities and individual businesses – without good visitor information yield can never be developed to its full potential. Any discussion of information provision needs to focus on the chain of events that occur prior to, during and after the visit is complete. The research programme revealed the importance of previous visits/word of mouth, the real value of local information centres and the relatively limited role that is currently played by the internet; it is the latter that is the focus of this Strategy.

Action 2: Enhancing regional web presence

We recommend a review of the existing web presence for the region in addition to the development of a new regional website that works on different layers: as an information resource for the visitor, as a linkage tool to other businesses within the region, as a tool to strengthen Visitor Information Centres and as a business and community resource. It will be vital to engage community in development of resources for the regional website – including opportunities for interaction with local schools and community groups.

The focus of the site will be on promoting the region's diverse array of amenities and features. Visitors will be able to find a depth of information on local amenities and heritage that is not currently available online. The focus will be on building opportunities for the visitor to create virtual trails of activities, to encourage longer stays and to maximise yield. The site is not designed to replace or duplicate national/regional/local sites, rather it is designed to provide an additional level of detailed, locally generated, information that can support, supplement and strengthen information provided elsewhere. The site does not replace or compete with individual business or community sites – it simply provides another route to reach them and a tool to enhance linkage creation.

The site will also provide links to relevant social media and will provide simple tools to enable local businesses to make more of social media opportunities and to populate existing national and regional destination sites with regional tourism information. The site will be compatible with smart phones.

The site will showcase local events; tourism, heritage and cultural information; community information and environmental initiatives; and local news, stories and tips for travellers. It will also be a resource for community members within the region and also for those who have located elsewhere and wish to reconnect to 'their place'.

Implementation:

A. A web audit is completed to identify the existing 'web presence' of the communities, businesses, and attractions of the Puhoi to Pakiri region and identify any gaps in existing information or functionality. This includes a broad range of community and business websites as well as national and regional portals, iSites, social media, and content on other key sites. A review of the web presence for each location focuses on the nature of links, and the degree to which the online presence of each location is supporting inter-regional connections, and the ability to create a 'sense of place'. There is no cost involved, the contribution will be provided pro bono by NZTRI and builds on initial work already conducted for the 2010/11 research programme.

Timeframe: By 1 February 2012

Responsible: NZTRI (pro bono) in partnership with the Incorporated Society

B. A regional website is developed and becomes an open platform to house digital, multi-media user-generated content. A web developer is appointed who is capable of creating a content management system to support user-generated multi-media content. An outline for the regional website is completed, key elements of the site are decided upon through meetings with the Incorporated Society and other key stakeholders and include imagery and 'look and feel', website structure, navigation, layout, core content and linkages.

The basic structure of the site would likely include: 'Places' to visit (e.g. towns, settlements), 'Things to Do', 'Events', 'Accommodation', 'Community' information, 'Other Businesses' (including non-tourism businesses), and 'Trails' - Google maps are integral to this process. The site is designed to be visitor friendly and smartphone accessible, and includes a poll facility, social media 'share' buttons, forums, and an ability to indicate affiliations and create linkages.

The site is capable of housing business and community-generated media. For example: a local enthusiast records a video, blog, or podcast about a cycle, walking or heritage trail; a long-term resident tells a story about the area using podcasts and historical images; a motel owner uploads images of her property and a video of the walk to local cafes and shops; Ngatiwai discuss place names that may have been lost over time, or share their history and affinity to the landscapes and ocean; business owner/operators create a page to promote their products or services. Content is moderated and quality controlled by the RTC and, where applicable, the Board of the Incorporated Society. The regional website is developed, ready to be populated with local user-generated content, and effectively links to other areas outside the Puhoi to Pakiri area i.e. other parts of the Rodney Ward and beyond.

We strongly recommend that the naming of the regional website represents the best opportunity to get buy-in to the development of a regional name/brand. This is a unique opportunity to uncover or create a functional, geographic or historically significant name for the area, but it is a process that needs to be handled sensitively so as not to exclude or alienate key local stakeholders.

Timeframe: By May 2012

Responsible: Incorporated Society, RTC, Web developer, and supported by Council/ATEED

C. Stakeholder engagement: Community & Business. The regional site concept is launched publicly at two local events where the approach to developing the website is outlined and basic details are presented. Those invited to attend include locals/community, tourism and business owner/operators, representatives from community groups, schools, heritage groups, environmental groups etc in and around Puhoi, Warkworth, Matakana, Snells Beach, Leigh, and Pakiri etc. Individuals, tourism and other business owner/operators are trained to populate the regional website with their content (e.g. text, images, podcasts, and videos).

Timeframe: By 1 July 2012 and ongoing

Action: RTC, Incorporated Society and external partner

D. Ongoing content generation: The RTC engages with community groups, schools, and residents to continually develop content for the regional website (local folklore, stories, heritage information, art, Maori culture, environmental practices, tips for travellers, etc). School children upload multi-media content to portray 'our place'; local food producers or wine makers blog or video a 'hands on' demonstration using their products; artists develop an interactive guide and trail; a marine tourism operator offers visitors the opportunity to share photos using social media (e.g. Facebook, Flickr); a surfer gives tips on favourites beaches; a heritage group records oral histories; citizens develop wikis for towns and attractions as well as blogs, videos or podcasts of local events.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Action: RTC, Incorporated Society and external partner

Action 3: Building Community Interaction

The personal touch and local knowledge provided by the staff and volunteers of the Visitor Information Centres (VIC) are something that was mentioned often by visitors surveyed in the research programme. One way to develop further the interaction between local and visitors is to explore the development of New Zealand's first greeter network.

The website www.globalgreeternetwork.info offers an example of how the region can make most of opportunities to connect visitors and locals in ways that will build the visitor experience, increase yield and also heighten the awareness among the the community of the tourism industry.

We recommend that the region becomes the first New Zealand member of the global greeter network.

Implementation:

- A. The Puhoi to Pakiri region becomes the first New Zealand member of the 'global greeter' network (www.globalgreeternetwork.info). The RTC raises awareness of the greeter network and begins to recruit/engage greeters.

- B. Local Ambassador programme: Key individuals in iSites in the P2P region are assigned and trained in a newly created 'Social Media Ambassador programme' to drive online conversations and engage residents and visitors alike through a variety of social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr). Some of these individuals also become integral members of the global greeter network. Social Media Ambassadors are selected based on their familiarity with, and passion for, the Puhoi to Pakiri area as a whole. Training is provided in the technical use of social media, key messages about the visitor experience, and etiquette for driving social media conversations.

Timeframe: By 1 June 2012 and ongoing

Action: RTC, Incorporated Society with support from ATEED or external partner

Visitor Experience & Business Development

The Research programme shows quite clearly that the vast majority of visitors have a positive experience during their time in the Puhoi to Pakiri Region. Willingness to recommend the region to others is extremely high and satisfaction with the various components of the industry is strong. It clearly makes sense to maintain and grow the position of the P2P region as both a day-tripper and longer stay destination for Aucklanders, and to build its appeal to other domestic and international visitors. While the role of international visitors and those from elsewhere in New Zealand may grow, Auckland will continue to be the dominant source market.

It is important, however, not to rest on one's laurels and there are ways that the region as a whole can enhance the visitor experience and improve business outcomes and that is the focus of the following strategic points:

Action 4: Enhance service quality across the region

Tourism stands or falls on the level of service provided to visitors. Measurement of satisfaction is critical and should be a core component of any ongoing research barometer (see Action 11 below).

While it is not realistic for the region to commence or develop its own training programmes it can undertake some initiatives to raise service levels. The first initiative would be to develop a small number of regional service related awards for local businesses. These would take the place of the broader Rodney District awards that were run in the past, but could be focused more specifically on service quality (and other dimensions see Action 4C and 7C).

The development of a local mentoring scheme is another tool that can work to enhance overall performance, not just of staff but also of owner operators. The scheme would take two forms – one would be the organisation of occasional seminars and presentations by experts of interest to the region. The other would involve the ability to look for mentors within the local area and to have opportunities to learn from the best. The website would feature a registry of 'go to people' in the region – local experts and key influencers. We would suggest a further award for the biggest individual contribution to the development of regional tourism i.e. a 'mentoring award'.

Implementation:

- A. A registry of key influencers, local experts and 'go to' people is developed and placed on the website. This includes local IT experts, heritage experts, hospitality trainers, and community leaders.
- B. Service related awards for regional businesses: an award is created and designed to provide added value and improve the visitor experience through product knowledge and better service.
- C. Local mentoring scheme: Mentoring award - an award is created to reward significant contributions to the development of regional tourism in terms of mentoring staff, operators etc. Mentors have delivered a programme of keynotes for workshops and seminars (see Action 6).

Timeframe: By November 2012 and ongoing

Responsible: RTC and the Incorporated Society supported by ATEED

Action 5: Optimise outcomes from events

The region hosts a number of events throughout the year. The regional website will be an excellent base through which to present information on all events and focus on maximising linkages with the surrounding area. Such an approach may also assist businesses and communities in coordinating activities to meet the demand associated with certain events.

It is essential here that an all encompassing view be adopted for 'events'. For example, the local school fair, fund-raising for the community hall, local sports events, and local arts events. It's about local events that visitors could participate in, as well as events for visitors that locals can join in on.

Implementation:

- A. An 'Events' calendar is developed and records all local events – from small scale e.g. local rugby matches, school fairs, craft shows, local fund raisers to large scale music festivals and sports events. A system to add and update events is included in a *relationship and communication plan* and via the regional website.
- B. Optimise outcomes from local events. Specific initiatives are designed to convert day-trippers attending events and festivals into overnight stays especially during low season. This particularly requires the development of value for money packages between event organisers and accommodation providers.

Timeframe: Provisional Events calendar 2012 (non web-based) by 1 January 2012 (then updated regularly online once website is in place)

Responsible: The Incorporated Society and then the RTC when appointed

Action 6: Grow the Visitor Experience through Networking

It is important in a region such as Puhoi to Pakiri to add value to every visit. Many people are visiting 'anchor attractions' e.g. Matakana Farmers Market, Leigh, and Goat Island. The question must be asked; how can visitors be encouraged to take time out to explore other dimensions of the regional product as well? How can they link to other experiences, spend more time and spend more money in the region?

Part of this specific Action will be achieved through the networking and linkage formation involved in the website (Action 2), such interaction can also be stimulated through seminars and local meetings. Active networking opportunities will stimulate interest in joining the Incorporated Society and will also stimulate new network development. Examples of network outcomes might include: the development of a set of trails and themed experiences e.g. local food producers, bird-watching, farm tours; or the RTC working with existing conference and meeting venues to identify and develop cross-selling and packaging opportunities.

Implementation

A. Breakfast meetings are held every month to bring tourism and business owner/operators across the P2P region together to listen to a keynote speaker; each breakfast gathering closes with a 'speed networking' session – an ATEED initiative similar in format to speed dating. The cost per participant is kept to a minimum.

Timeframe: Commence March 2012 (ongoing)

Responsible: RTC with support from ATEED (ATEED to facilitate the first event)

B. The Google Maps developed during the Visitor Strategy research programme should be further developed as they are designed to play an important role here. These maps can be used as tools to enhance networking/trail formation. Community or not-for-profit organisations should be allocated placement on Google Maps free of charge. The RTC will work with business owner/operators who are members of the Incorporated Society to enable them to add their own content to relevant Google maps and use the 'affiliations' function of the regional website (see Action 2B). Themes for 'Trails' will be decided upon by the Incorporated Society and developed by the RTC. For an example of the way businesses, communities and attractions are linked by self-selecting affiliations with others see www.westernsouthland.co.nz/pages/viewtrail.php?trail=28.

Timeframe: Commence April 2012 and ongoing

Responsible: RTC in close liaison with the Incorporated Society

Community experience

A critical component of broadening the visitor experience is 'community interaction'. The 2010/11 research programme revealed that a significant number of visitors would have liked to get a deeper understanding of the place they are visiting: heritage, local knowledge and stories - are all valuable tourism assets.

Action 7: Building Community Input and Outreach

The website (Action 2) will provide communities with the opportunity to provide content and stories about the local identity of their place within the P2P region.

Past experience shows that the involvement of local schools can also be a great way to engage community with tourism. Curriculum at both intermediate and secondary school level engages with tourism in a number of ways, the website should feature this work where relevant and should also look to feature and develop a 'kids' view' on some sections of the website, or showcase sports teams and Kapa Haka groups.

It is vital that the website and word of mouth also be used to disseminate information about tourism to those interested in the community. One public presentation each year should be provided to give an update on tourism in the region and to keep community engaged.

An award to the local community member who has done the most for tourism and the local student that has made the biggest contribution to the industry could also be provided. In the longer term this could lead to community-based sustainable tourism awards for groups that effectively manage, develop or plan tourism in their locality.

Implementation

A. Engage with local schools and tertiary education providers: The RTC provides Education Liaison with primary, and secondary schools, and tertiary education providers to improve the links between the industry and local schools and colleges. Students are engaged in contribution of digital multi-media content for the regional website and align these activities to curriculum and NCEA standards. To build ICT skills and capabilities through engaging with local tertiary education providers e.g. Lifeway College media design students.

Timeframe: Commence October 2011 and ongoing
Responsible: The Incorporated Society, then the RTC

B. Tourism updates: One public presentation each year to update community on the regional visitor industry.

Timeframe: Commence June 2012 and ongoing
Responsible: RTC in close liaison with the Incorporated Society, with support from ATEED

- C. Community tourism awards as part of the broader regional awards outlined in Action 4. A student award, community group award and an individual community member 'tourism champion' award are created.

Timeframe: Commence November 2012 and ongoing

Responsible: RTC and the Incorporated Society, with support from ATEED

Infrastructure

The research programme highlighted visitor, community and business concerns with infrastructure and its ability to handle the number of visitors and local users during peak periods. This is a critical issue as it causes frustration and can clearly reduce levels of overall satisfaction. For residents growing congestion is often the very thing they have tried to escape from.

Nearly all visitors arrive in the region by private vehicle. To develop sustainable slow tourism it is vital that transport issues be addressed. The development of a slower more interactive form of tourism will remain dependent on people being able to reach the region by car. Once there, management of transport issues will be critical in enabling more relaxed and interactive experiences.

In addition to improved management of vehicular movements and congestion it is also critical to develop infrastructure that can directly support slow tourism development – cycling and walking in particular.

Action 8: Review of Traffic and Waste Management Issues

The research programme shows that roads and traffic related issues are a growing concern for both residents and visitors alike. A review is also needed of public waste disposal. It is recommended that this review be done through cost-effective crowd sourcing – using locals to gather relevant information over a short period of time.

Implementation

- A. Transport issues review. Collect evidence to identify traffic 'hot spots' and transport needs for locals and visitors alike. During peak season periods it is vital that evidence be gathered to show where congestion is at its worst and where parking and basic safety issues are at risk. We recommend a crowd-sourcing approach with businesses and community members encouraged to do simple traffic counts and to record issues of concern. These can then be highlighted to regional planners for action.

Timeframe: Summer season 2013 (and ongoing when necessary)

Responsible: Led by the Incorporated Society and RTC, supported by Council/ATEED

- B. Public waste/rubbish review. Collect evidence to identify rubbish 'hot spots' for locals and visitors alike. During peak season periods it is vital that evidence be gathered to show where public rubbish issues are at their worst. We recommend a crowd-sourcing approach with businesses and community members encouraged to do simple reviews of rubbish issues and to record areas of concern. These can then be highlighted to regional planners for action.

Timeframe: Summer season 2013 (and ongoing when necessary)

Responsible: Led by the Incorporated Society and RTC, supported by Council/ATEED

- C. Gather further information on visitor, business and community dissatisfaction with traffic and waste management through the visitor, community and business barometers (Action 11) so that improvements can be evaluated and pressing issues better understood.

Timeframe: 2012/13 high season, 2014/15 high season

Responsible: Incorporated society and external partner with support from Council/ATEED

Action 9: Encourage Walking and Cycling

Walking is a critical dimension to slow tourism – it is the simplest way for people to move around and is also a great way for people to connect to local places. At the present time while there are some highlighted walking tracks, the range of opportunities for local walks/meanders is limited and there is only basic information for the visitor.

The cycling dimension of slow tourism should be viewed as a priority. In April 2009, the New Zealand government gave the green light for a national cycleway project to be built in New Zealand. Regional cycling tracks and trails dubbed the Great Rides will eventually form a national cycle network. With the national network of trails opening up during the life of this strategy and growing interest in cycling Auckland the region needs to be better prepared for a potential upswing in this form of transport use.

Implementation

- A. Walking. Develop local micro-trails for walking and also build on existing pathways and trails. Link to and from the Te Araroa walkway, and Mt Tamahunga Walkway among others. Work with local community to get their ideas on local walks and develop a wiki (or review existing wiki information) for each local walk and add links from the regional website. The type of information locals can provide includes a realistic description of accessibility, duration, degree of difficulty (including suitability for children), track conditions, location (hidden gems), safety and environmental information, local protocols and expected behaviour when using the walks/trails, points of interest, interpretation, and facilities. To enrich the 'walking'

experience, work with community to develop digital content with local folklore, music, art, poetry and stories related to heritage or natural attractions along the way.

- B. Cycling. Build on the national cycle way approach – look to develop a range of local trails, and leverage off opportunities provided as new roads are built and existing routes become less congested. Draw on local knowledge and ideas (similar to A. Walking) that can eventually be converted into more detailed concept plans. Use Google Maps to plot existing, and plan new, cycle trails in the area.
- C. Signage audit. To determine how easy it is to find the local information that you require once you are on the ground, conduct a series of simple and cost-effective mystery/shadow shopping approaches in key areas to audit street signage, signage for the disabled etc with the following questions in mind. What types of signs are currently in place? Are additional signs needed? Where are they needed - what are the best locations? Are these locations likely to be approved by national or local authorities? During the inspection of potential sign sites note the speed of traffic, maximum viewing distance and minimum reading distance required.

Timeframe: Commences June 2012 and ongoing

Responsible: RTC and the Incorporated Society in close liaison with Council

Resilience, responsiveness and decision support

Too often tourism strategies focus on managing growth rather than developing approaches that can assist in times of difficulty. While the collaboration and communication that underpin this plan will enhance resilience and flexibility in the face of unforeseen (or expected) challenges it is important to have some more formal structure and plans in place to respond to negative issues. While the region is clearly seen as a safe place to visit and prospects for visitor growth appear strong, there must be mechanisms in place to manage problematic issues as they arise.

Future development of the visitor industry and evaluation of the Strategy must be based on quality data. The research surveys conducted for this Strategy represent a legacy that can be used on a regular basis to ascertain progress, monitor problems and highlight areas for future development. Research engagement can also be a powerful tool to build awareness of tourism among business and community members and also enhance networking. The processes involved in 'doing the research' provide useful points of collaboration for stakeholders and facilitate entry to the network by providing individuals with a short-term 'project' and tasks with which they can easily become involved and get to know others. Examples include working across towns, agencies, business groups, and locals to promote online surveys, or collect email data.

Action 10: Develop rapid response mechanisms

There is a need in any visitor strategy to look carefully at how an area might manage negative publicity, significant complaints or sudden industry downturns. It is clearly impossible to predict what problems (natural or man-made) may have a negative impact on the regional industry. What is critical is having approaches in place to enable rapid response to any negative publicity.

Implementation

- A. Review any complaints that have been collected through the industry barometer or through the feedback mechanism on the website, or social media more generally. Review of web resources providing feedback on the product (word of mouth monitoring).
- B. Ensure coverage in media and press is monitored and reviewed. Enhance existing relationships with local, regional and national media.
- C. Have in place a 'rapid response' team (voluntary) of qualified media savvy people who can work quickly to deal with issues that need to be highlighted or addressed.

Timeframe: By April 2012 and ongoing

Responsible: RTC with support from others on a voluntary basis

Action 11: Ongoing research to support decision making

The 2010/11 research programme that underpins this strategy provides a series of tools around which to base future research. We recommend that refined versions of the three baseline surveys: community, business and visitor, be used as the basis for an ongoing barometer of industry performance. We recommend completing the community, visitor and business surveys at least every two years – the seasonal focus/duration of the surveys to be decided based on budget and time availability. Tailored questions can be added (and existing questions removed) when needed, to reflect industry developments or areas of concern. For example it may be possible to add questions that reflect 'buy-in' to any branding/naming for the region that is developed early in the strategy time frame.

The surveys themselves can be administered relatively cost-effectively; however, as shown in the 2010/11 research programme, one challenge is to get the industry engaged. It is essential that the role played by research in getting industry to collaborate and work together not be forgotten – while the research outcomes are essential to guide future regional development, the process of conducting the research can also be a valuable way to get groups to work together. There are also many opportunities to build links and partnerships with university based Institutions, including maintaining links with NZTRI. There are also possibilities to work with individual graduate students that may be exploring relevant topics.

Implementation

A. Continuation of Industry Barometer: Repeat of business, community and visitor surveys.

Timeframe: 2012/13 high season, 2014/15 high season

Responsible: Incorporated society and external partner with support from Council/ATEED

B. Research Agenda: Develop a check-list of future research needs that can be viewed by graduate students and tertiary Institution staff who may be looking for research ideas and opportunities in the region. These projects will probably not require funding – rather they could be supported with some logistical support.

Timeframe: By June 2012 and then updated on a continual basis

Responsible: RTC in close liaison with the Incorporated Society and external partner

Concluding statement

While the Actions outlined above cover a broad range of themes and issues, they all focus on a common theme – that of collaborating and working as a region in a manner that engages all stakeholders. It is this approach that can create a further vital dimension to an already outstanding set of regional resources – a level of coordination and regional buy-in that creates an improved level of business performance and community economic development.

It is the linking of the various regional attributes into deeper visitor experiences that is key to the success of tourism in the Puhoi to Pakiri region – not simply attempts to place the area under one overarching brand. If a brand needs to be chosen it is clear from the community, business and visitor research that there is no one name that stands out. While Matakana is the most common choice provided by respondents when asked what name they associate with the region as a whole, no more than a third of any group (business, community, visitor) selected it as the name they most associate with the region. We suggest that developing a name for the website will be the time to address the branding issue further. It will be important that any overarching name is as inclusive as possible and does not cause the excellent progress that has been made towards regional collaboration to slow or break down. It is also critical to remember that there are a range of identifiable and strong sub-regional brands (e.g. Puhoi, Mahurangi, Warkworth, Matakana, Leigh, Snells Beach, and Pakiri) already in existence that businesses, visitors and communities often feel extremely attached to. The goal here is not to do away with these local brands, but rather to build on and strengthen them through a broader regional brand and increased levels of networking and collaboration.

The strategy we have focused on for marketing and developing the visitor industry in the region is interwoven with the theme of regional economic development. The approach we have outlined focuses on the most significant and cost-effective avenues for the transmission of visitor information – word of mouth and the internet. It also emphasises the need to add quality and depth to the visitor experience in order to build yield and industry performance. Quality and depth can be added, it is argued, through enhanced service levels, improved business networking and collaboration, and the greater involvement of community. By ‘slowing’ the visitor down through enabling greater visitor - community/business interaction this strategy is designed to create sustained economic opportunities for generations to come. This broad focus on tourism as a tool to achieve broader regional economic outcomes is critical because it stresses the fact that tourism really is everyone’s business.

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Appendix 2 - Funding options

This Visitor Strategy offers the businesses and communities of the Puhoi to Pakiri area the opportunity to work together to improve the local economy and enhance competitiveness, thereby encouraging sustainable and inclusive growth. As such, the focus is on social and economic development through a coordinated visitor industry. This brings new opportunities for funding beyond 'tourism' only, by drawing on other pools of funding (ICT, community, culture & heritage, education and capability building etc). There are a number of funding options available through various central and local government agencies, as well as private enterprise and community grants to consider.

InternetNZ Community Projects Funding

Link: <http://internetnz.net.nz/communityprojects>

Priorities for funding: To promote and conduct education and research related to the Internet and inter-networking; to promote widely and generally available access to the Internet

Closing date: 23 September 2011

Department of Internal Affairs

Link: <http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/Funding-and-grants>

Crown funded schemes:

Community Development Scheme: The next funding round is anticipated to open in November 2011 and close in March 2012.

Community Organisation Grants Scheme: COGS has one funding round per year. Applications can be submitted from 1 June, and must be in by 5.00pm on the last Wednesday of July in each year.

Lottery Grants:

National Community Committee	18 January 2012
Regional Community Committees	2 November 2011, 29 February 2012
Community Facilities Fund	29 February 2012
Environment and Heritage Committee	2 November 2011, 14 March 2012
Marae Heritage and Facilities	22 February 2012
Community Sector Research	To be confirmed

ASB Community Trust

Link: <http://www.asbcommunitytrust.org.nz/funding>

Closing dates: Various in 2012 – dates will be posted to the website when released

Auckland Council – grants and funding

Link: www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/SERVICES/COMMUNITYFACILITIESUPPORT/GRANTSFUNDDING/Pages/home.aspx

Closing dates: Various

Arts and Culture

Environmental and heritage

Community development (21 October 2011)

Events

Local board discretionary community grants

Universities and Polytechnics

AUT University internal funding has already cross-subsidised the Visitor Strategy research programme in 2011. Universities and Polytechnics have resources to seed staff research, support post graduate student research, and create ongoing partnerships that provide public value. AUT internal funding mechanisms can be applied to support ongoing research in 2012.

The New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI)
www.nztri.org

The New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) is based at the Auckland University of Technology.

Contact addresses

Professor Simon Milne
Director
simon.milne@aut.ac.nz

Carolyn Deuchar
Senior Research Officer
carolyn.deuchar@aut.ac.nz
M: 021 1665 878

New Zealand Tourism Research Institute, AUT University
Private Bag 92006
AUCKLAND
New Zealand
T: +64-921-8890