

Manaaki Whenua.

Care for the land.

Manaaki Tangata.

Care for the people.

Haere Whakamua.

Go forward.

**DESTINATION
RANGITIKEI**

Rangitikei Destination Management Plan

This report was prepared by TRC Tourism for Rangitīkei District Council.



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Acknowledgement

E ngā iwi, e ngā reo, e ngā karangaranga maha o tātou, tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa.

E tika ana hei poropororaki i a rātou mā. Me pēnei ake te kōrero, tukuna rātou kia okioki i runga te moenga roa. Āpiti hono, tātai hono, rātou ngā mate katoa ki a rātou, Āpiti hono tātou hono, tātou te hunga ora ki a tātou mā, Tēnā koutou katoa.



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Foreword

Our district is home to unspoilt land steeped in history with panoramic views leading out to Mount Ruapehu and Taranaki, the Kaimanawa and Ruahine Range and of course our mightiest river - Rangitikei.

Those of us who are lucky enough to live here and experience what our district has to offer take great pleasure in been able to share its majesty with friends, family, and visitors.

We appreciate how special the Rangitikei is – the way life should be - and the importance of looking after our people and land.

Destination Rangitikei is the first destination management plan for the Rangitikei district and highlights ways forward for the community, Council, iwi/hapū/marae and stakeholders to nurture the growth of our visitor economy based on our vision and values as a district.

Our district is changing, and we have a very positive feeling for the future. The number of people visiting and moving here, establishing connections, and setting up business is staggering. The growth is both positive and challenging and this plan seeks to build on the positives and address the challenges.

Council is looking for new ways to work alongside our communities, iwi/hapū/marae and stakeholders,

While we have work to do to lay the foundations, this plan is designed to be owned by the district and implemented by industry, community, iwi/hapū/marae and stakeholders through the formation of an

advisory group. Ultimately Council's role will become largely one of facilitation, helping to tell our story and supporting business growth and product development/

I acknowledge the work done over the many years by various groups and organisations that have supported the visitor economy or worked to promote our towns and district. You are all to be commended and I encourage anyone looking to join the journey to reach out to see how you can be involved.

I am excited to see the doors this plan can help to open that have previously been closed to us as a district. We simply could not pursue supporting the visitor economy without this plan



Mayor Andy Watson
Rangitikei District





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Introduction

Manaaki whenua. Manaaki tangata. Haere whakamua.

Care for the land. Care for the people. Go forward.

This whakataukī reflects the overall ethos and guiding principle for those who call the Rangitīkei District home. To be successful, caring for the land and its people must be at the heart of any plan for developing and deepening the Rangitīkei visitor experience.

Nothing has influenced the Rangitīkei District landscape more than the mighty Rangitīkei River, which lends its name to the district itself. It has carved its way from its headwaters in the Kaimanawa Ranges to the Tasman Sea in the south, forming passages of majestic river canons, alternating with quiet stretches of sparkling trout-laden pools.

With the abundance of natural assets throughout the district, colourful villages, family-friendly activities and dramatic rural landscapes, the Rangitīkei offers a lifestyle like no other, and is referred to by visitors and locals alike as ‘the way life should be’. The people of the Rangitīkei are known for their welcoming nature, and it is a place where diversity is acknowledged and celebrated.

The people are looked after, the land is cared for, and the spirit is strong.



Executive Plan on a Page

Aspirations

Manaaki Tangata

- Bring Whanau Home
- Communities are connected
- A warm and welcoming Rangitikei
- Retain positive social licence
- Iwi are sharing their stories.

Manaaki Whenua

- Lead the way
- Enhancement of green spaces
- Enhance our understanding of Inland Waterways
- Manaaki Tangata, Manaaki Whenua celebrated.

Vision

A destination to live and visit with a strong identity, welcoming communities, and endless opportunities. The way life should be.

Guiding Principles

1. Our visitor-economy ecosystem
2. Collaborative advantage
3. Grow tourism's positive impact on communities and the environment
4. Encourage and support sustainable land use for tourism
5. Enhance our sense of place
6. Businesses operate responsibly and ethically.

Key Focus Areas

Manaaki Tangata

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata
What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

The people of the Rangitikei stand strong and proud of who they are, where they have come from, and the future they are developing for generations to come.

The desire to ensure that people can return home to the Rangitikei was expressed multiple times during the consultation and development of this plan. There was an expectation that visitors and new residents in the area would feel welcomed, and a recognised the sense of connection that exists between the people of the district.

The actions outlined in this area of focus are designed to help achieve these aspirations for the community and deliver vigorous growth from the visitor economy.

Manaaki Whenua

Ko au te taiao, ko te taiao to au
I am the environment, and the environment is me.

The landscapes and natural environments within the Rangitikei are important taonga. There is an expectation that actions taken to manage the destination and grow the visitor economy will derive positive impacts for te taiao in the district.

For many in the Rangitikei community, the protection and preservation of the natural environment is paramount to the success of the destination. Without focus on ensuring that these assets are protected and regenerated where necessary, there is concern that the visitor-economy will have detrimental effects on what they hold most dear, and the social licence for the sector will plummet.

These actions work in tandem to help ensure these natural assets are there for future generations to enjoy.



Our Aspirations

To determine the path toward success in achieving a shared vision for a destination, it is integral to understand what success looks like for the community, iwi partners, and stakeholders of the visitor economy within the district. An in-depth and varied community consultation process was undertaken to capture the many voices of the Rangitikei and to understand their aspirations for the future.

During the consultation process, the expectation was expressed that tourism – and the overall visitor-economy for the district – would support the communities of Rangitikei and their natural environments. Tourism as an industry has always benefited from communities and their natural assets. So, for the sector to become more sustainable and resilient into the future, there needs to be a stronger connection and relationship between all levels of the visitor-economy and local communities.

An important aspect of this destination management plan is to ensure that areas of focus and strategic imperatives provide strong positive impacts socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically for the people of the district. Where there might have been a strong economic wellbeing expectation in the past, recent disruptors have shown clearly that focus should be given to all wellbeings. If we strive to develop opportunities and programmes that will derive positive economic impacts for the district, there also need to be corresponding social, cultural and environmental impacts, to ensure these wellbeings are rising as a tide together.

For the Rangitikei, the aspirations of the destination fall beneath the key elements that make up the core strengths of the district – the people and the place. It is an imperative for all those who were consulted that the people who live, work, play and travel in the district are looked after, along with the environments that form a compelling reason for people to visit.

Manaaki Tangata

Care For Our People

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

For the Rangitikei, the interests and wellbeing of people sits at the heart of what the community expects for their future. This is an ethos that exists not just for those who live in the district, but also for those who visit. For the destination management plan to succeed, it must allow for the future the community envisages for their children and their children's children, and the many generations to come.

BRING WHANAU HOME

Perhaps one of the strongest shared aspirations to come out of consultation was the desire for whanau who have travelled beyond the district's borders to come home. To enable this aspiration, there needs to be an increase in quality employment available within the district. Whether that is within the tourism sector or within other economic sectors, enabling quality employment opportunities will help achieve this aspiration. Enhanced education opportunities, career development pathways within the workplace, and providing affordable housing will also enable this aspiration to be fulfilled.

COMMUNITIES ARE CONNECTED

The desire for stronger connections between the communities and villages throughout the district was a clearly shared aspiration. Where there is visible engagement and recognition of that connection within a destination, the interactions and experiences within them are authentic. This involves finding ways of working that will enable visitors to engage with the people of Rangitikei through a range of experiences and gateways. This would include both paid and unpaid experience activities, increased awareness of the unique strengths of the individual villages and communities in the Rangitikei, and the ability to attract public and private investment that will benefit both locals and visitors.



A WARM AND WELCOMING RANGITĪKEI

For many years, the Māori value of Manaakitanga has been embraced by the tourism sector as a principle that helps ensure that destinations host their visitors appropriately. The Rangitīkei takes this a step further: visitors will be empowered through the experiences they have with the people of the district, while the hosts are empowered through the connections made.

If this reciprocal level of association is achieved, then the Rangitīkei will be seen as a warm and welcoming destination that celebrates the diversity of those who look to live, work, play, or visit in the district.

RETAIN POSITIVE SOCIAL LICENCE

Positive social licence is imperative for the sustainable development and growth of the visitor economy. Locals and domestic New Zealanders are an important visitor base for the tourism sector, now and into the future, so positive social licence and the need for communities to view visitors and the tourism sector as positive and beneficial is even more important.

IWI ARE SHARING THEIR STORIES

Iwi in the district have a story to tell, and it is important to the communities of Rangitīkei that their story be told. Supporting iwi with experience-development opportunities to assist them in sharing these stories will add strength to the destination positioning of the district.



Manaaki Whenua

Care For Our Land

Ko au te taiao, ko te taiao to au

I am the environment, and the environment is me.

There is a strong sense of pride and identity for locals throughout the district that is connected to the land. For tourism to maintain positive social licence, it will need to ensure that the sector supports the regeneration of both the environment and the individual communities. The district is home to several environments that are susceptible to impacts. While the community is supportive of the visitor economy highlighting these assets to grow the visitor economy, there must also be an associated benefit for the environment.

LEAD THE WAY

The connection between the people of Rangitikei and the land is undeniable. There are a number of environmental initiatives already operating within the district and an upswell within the community to seek opportunities to support the regeneration to ensure that the land is cared for. This includes exploring initiatives that support recycling and upcycling initiatives, highlight the innovation in the region from a rural sector and waste management perspective, and providing locals and visitors with the opportunity to actively support this ethos of caring for the natural environment. Associated with this aspiration is the potential to educate travellers on how to travel sustainably and understand the impacts of different travel styles and decisions on a destination.

ENHANCEMENT OF GREEN SPACES

The district has a range of parks, berms and reserves that are managed by the council on behalf of the community, as well as a number managed by the Department of Conservation and Forest and Bird. There are active work streams and plans for working with community groups to ensure they manage effectively and maintain these assets for future generations. The Parks, Open Spaces, and Sporting Facilities Strategy helps to articulate what the community wants for these assets, along with the vision for the entire district in the future. Community feedback was clear that there is an expectation that these community green spaces throughout the district will be kept, and there is the potential to build a sense of connection to the identity and pride-of-place for visitors within these spaces.



ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INLAND WATERWAYS

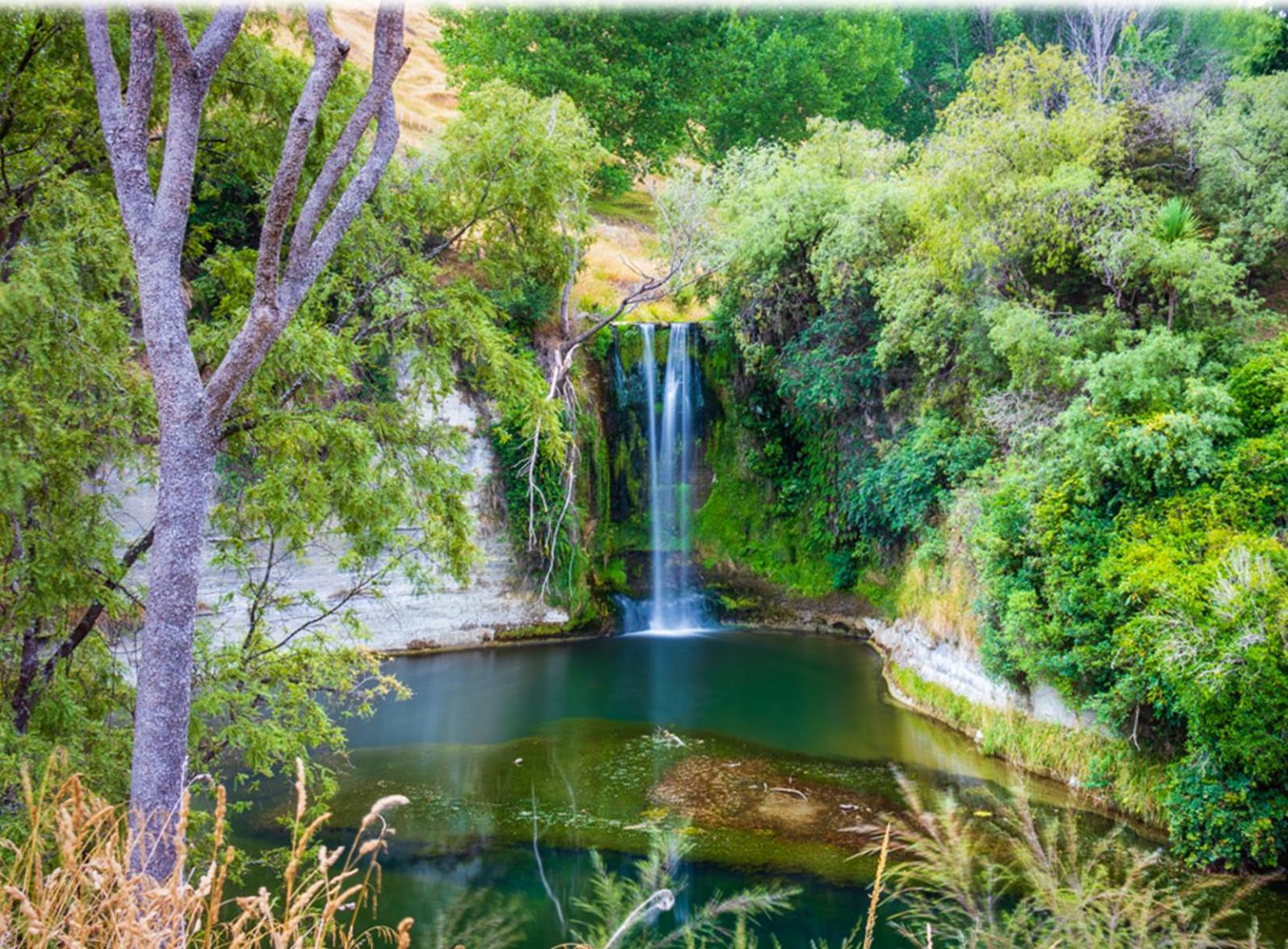
Rangitikei is home to several inland waterways. There is acceptance within the community that these make compelling reasons for people to choose the district to live, play and visit, but that these interactions should not be at the expense of the waterways themselves. These rivers are the lifeblood of the community and are integral to the pride-of-place and sense of identity visible throughout the district. They are used for traditional mahinga kai, and have clear cultural value beyond what can be seen.

Community, iwi, and stakeholders were consistent in their desire to see these waterways managed effectively and ensure users on waterways understand the community and cultural value these assets have, and the potential health and safety issues that are present in some areas of the rivers.

MANAAKI TANGATA, MANAAKI WHENUA CELEBRATED

This love of people and place that is ingrained within the local communities of the district should be celebrated.

Community, iwi and stakeholders have shown a strong sense of identity and place and there are aspirations to ensure that these are acknowledged.



Our Shared Vision

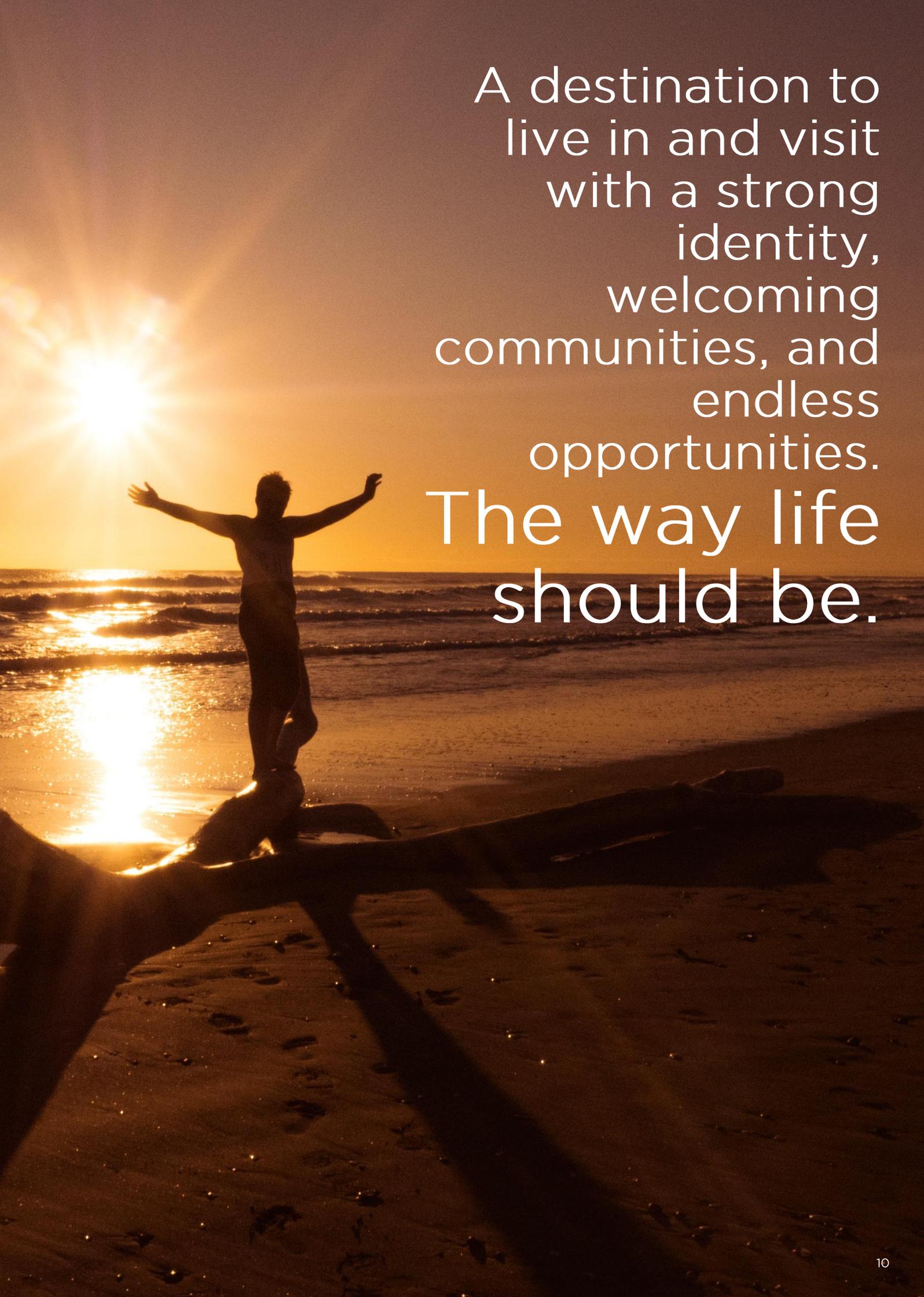
The Rangitikei District is steeped in rich cultural history and stories that lend themselves to the development of tourism experiences that will enhance the visitor economy for the district.

During consultation it became very clear that there is a strong sense of place throughout the district. Each of the villages in the district has its own character and unique positioning. This makes them compelling stops along any journey, and can tell a broader story when connected. Locals are very proud to call the Rangitikei home, and the Rangitikei river cements that connection, carving its way from mountain to sea.

With people and place sitting at the heart of the aspirations for the district, it was not surprising to identify that there is a powerful community feel that is welcoming to new locals and visitors alike. There is an expectation that visitors will be welcomed into the district by the locals, and that this level of connection will be reciprocal - with visitors open to learning more about the people and place of the destination they have opted to spend time in.

Given the landscapes and rural nature of the district, there were multiple times throughout the consultation when stakeholders observed that life within the district was 'as it should be'. Built on a foundation of strong family values, it was seen as a destination that is great to live in, offers fantastic opportunities for visitors to connect with people and place, and where the community is always seeking opportunities to improve the district for future generations. Therefore, the vision for Manaaki Tangata, Manaaki Whenua, a destination management plan for the Rangitikei is consistent with what was shared through consultation.





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live in and visit
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The way life
should be.

Important Principles that will be Reflected in the Plan

When developing the action plans for the district, there are several key principles that should be considered.

OUR VISITOR-ECONOMY ECOSYSTEM

Tourism, by its nature, involves the destination as a whole. It should not be seen as a sector that benefits a few or is controlled and managed by the tourism industry alone. Both people and place are important for the delivery of the destination experience. This includes iwi partners, local governments, the district's natural resources, cultural assets and traditions, communities and their requirements, and even the buildings and infrastructure. Their roles will differ in size and scale depending on what is required to help achieve the community aspirations and visions within this plan, utilising the visitor economy as the vehicle for reaching that success.

COLLABORATIVE ADVANTAGE

There is a desire among the stakeholders, partners and communities consulted, that the plan should encourage collaboration to help ensure the success of tourism in the district. By working toward a strong sense of collaborative advantage, and not competitive advantage, the district will derive greater benefits for communities across all wellbeings. This will also enhance the visitor experience within the district and encourage repeat visitation.

GROW TOURISM'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

There is a strong expectation from communities that the tourism sector and the broader visitor economy will derive positive impacts for the community – environmentally, socially, culturally, and economically. It is necessary to ensure that the recommended actions can derive benefits across all four wellbeing pillars, and that these rise as a tide because of the recommended action. There is also a requirement that any adverse impacts on these wellbeings will be managed and mitigated.

ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE LAND USE FOR TOURISM

To maximise the potential of growth for the visitor economy, there is a need to ensure that there is a level of understanding of managing land for tourism. This would include working with Māori landowners with tourism aspirations to understand what is possible on their land, and what is not. It is also around ensuring that iwi have access to their sites of significance and customary resources, such as mahinga kai. Lack of understanding of the value of places to the whanau, hapū, and iwi of the district will need to be addressed. Spatial planning, building design, and facility management will also play a major role in improving land efficiency in the tourism sector.

ENHANCE OUR SENSE OF PLACE

A strong civic pride and sense of place was clear throughout the consultation period for this plan. People were supportive of the visitor economy and would like to see the sector grow. The social licence for tourism within the community was positive, and there seemed to be a genuine desire to see tourism become a larger sector and have economic strength for the district – but not at the expense of the lives of those who live in the district. The destination management plan should enable this sense of pride to grow, and potentially assist in building awareness of the destination.

OPERATE RESPONSIBLY AND ETHICALLY

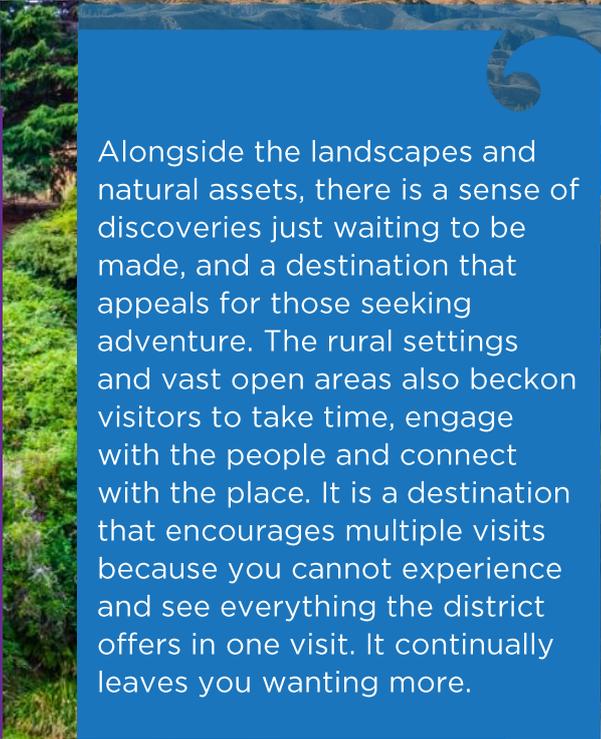
Actions that seek to develop the industry and visitor economy through encouraging the development of additional experiences should ensure that these businesses are set up and run to operate responsibly and ethically. Actions should encourage sustainable and best business practices that enable the district to achieve its aspirations and vision and derive maximum benefit for the community.



Destination Positioning



The natural environment, and the ability to hear the stories and histories on the landscapes within the district are key destination strengths that can develop strong positioning of the district as a destination.



Alongside the landscapes and natural assets, there is a sense of discoveries just waiting to be made, and a destination that appeals for those seeking adventure. The rural settings and vast open areas also beckon visitors to take time, engage with the people and connect with the place. It is a destination that encourages multiple visits because you cannot experience and see everything the district offers in one visit. It continually leaves you wanting more.



Top 10 Engagement Headlines

A range of consultation sessions were held in the development of this destination management plan. These sessions included 1:1 sessions with stakeholders, community open door sessions to capture as many voices throughout the district as possible, sessions with iwi, conversations with community groups and an online consultation tool¹ for those who could not make scheduled sessions.

1. There needs to be more opportunities for **locals and visitors to engage with the district's Māori stories and histories**
2. The **natural assets and cultural identity of the Rangitīkei must be protected**, while regenerating areas that need it
3. The **rivers and inland waterways are vital to the region**. Engagement should be encouraged, but only in the right way
4. Visitors and travellers need to know why they should stop, so **wayfinding and interpretation assets need to be improved**
5. The visitor economy should **support the community and the environment**
6. The district needs to work together: **collaborative advantage over competitive advantage**
7. There needs to be more things to do, to **give people a reason to stay in the Rangitīkei longer**
8. There is an opportunity to **unlock the potential of natural assets** through connection with people and powerful storytelling
9. There is a desire to enable people to return home by **optimising the visitor economy**
10. There is a need to build **awareness of the district as a destination** – not just a place you drive through to get to a destination.

¹ Social Pinpoint – Development of a Destination Management Plan for the Rangitīkei District



Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities identified through consultation:

MĀORI TOURISM EXPERIENCES ALIGNED TO ASPIRATIONS

Through many of the discussions held in the district, the ability to connect with local Māori in places of significance and hear stories that bring the landscapes to life was identified as a major opportunity for compelling experience development. Fortuitously, this resonates with the aspirations iwi shared at their sessions to unlock the potential of the visitor economy to support Māori communities in Rangitīkei.

Opportunities to explore included:

- **Experiences on marae**
This could range from marae run activities and experiences through to collaboration with other industry within the region. There are marae in the district that are already offering experiences, but this opportunity could be explored further to assist other marae with similar aspirations to find out their point of difference.
- **Storytelling themes**
From the beginnings of the Rātana movement to the travels of Tamatea-Pokai-Whenua through the district and beyond, there are many story thematics that are unique to the Rangitīkei, and would be compelling for visitors and locals alike to learn.

- **Inland Waterways**
These were the highways of the past, transporting people and freight throughout the district and the country on waka. These waterways connected and supported the settlements that appeared along the banks of the rivers, providing the ability to feed and sustain the people. Travelling these highways and hearing these stories of the past would be a great experience that would strengthen the destination's positioning.
- **Mahinga Kai**
This refers to traditional gathering of food and other natural resources and places where food could be gathered. Foraging and food production is becoming of increased interest to visitors.
- **Rongoā**
Rongoā encompasses herbal remedies, physical therapies, and spiritual healing. These indigenous practices to sustain and support the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals are increasingly sought after, given recent global disruptors and greater focus on health and wellbeing.
- **Collaborations with others**
There is a shared desire among those consulted to work with existing operators and provide a cultural element to a more developed or broader itinerary, to enhance the overall visitor experience within the district.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Rangitikei is centrally located, and easy to access from just about anywhere in the North Island. When travelling either north or south, the most travelled route takes in almost the entire district. This provides the opportunity to engage with those just travelling through, as well as to become a drive-market destination for a large catchment area in the North Island.

HERITAGE LED RESTORATION

There are a high number of built-heritage sites throughout the district in various stages of disrepair. There is an opportunity to derive support from the visitor economy for the restoration of these sites. A range of walking heritage tours offered in other regions are increasing in popularity, as visitors want to understand what it was like to live in a district years ago.

CONNECTING VISITORS TO THE PRODUCERS, INNOVATORS AND CREATIVE SECTOR

Rangitikei has rich rural farmlands and several quality producers, farmers, and innovators in the primary sector. An opportunity exists to provide cross-collaborative experiences that combine a tourism experience with aspects of these other successful sectors in the district. There is also the opportunity to look at working with smaller cottage industries that operate in the area. Visitors are often looking to buy something from the destinations they visit, that are unique and created by someone local.

ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL TOWNSHIPS

Each of the individual townships within the district has a look and feel that is specific to them. This creates the opportunity to develop experiences and themes that are strongly linked to each town. This could create a corridor of themed experiences that visitors could engage with while travelling north or south, and provide a reason for people to stop and spend some time.

A DISTRICT WITH THREE INFORMATION HUBS

There are currently three operational visitor centres within the district: Bulls, Marton, and Taihape. The role of i-SITES will change in the future and there is an opportunity to operate these visitor information centres to be beneficial to the district as a whole. Exploring what opportunities might exist for i-SITE staff to work with industry on packaging and alternative ways of working presents an opportunity for the Rangitikei to change how visitors interact with visitor centres, and potentially create experiences of their own.

Challenges Identified Through Consultation

LACK OF COHESION AND STRATEGY

A consistent barrier presented during consultation was the lack of cohesion between stakeholders within the district and the absence of a strategy to help ensure the success of the visitor-economy. The development of this destination management plan will assist with the lack of strategic direction and intent, but work is required to address the identified lack of cohesion. The absence of a recognised Regional Tourism Organisation for the district, and clarity around who plays what role in developing and growing the visitor-economy, were identified catalysts that add to the lack of cohesion in the Rangitikei.

RESOURCES ARE STRETCHED

Many of the industry and visitor-economy stakeholders identified a distinct lack of resources to help optimise the sector. This was especially true for iwi partners in the district who have multiple roles and responsibilities, many with a strong social-wellbeing focus. During recent years, this social focus has been all-consuming, so finding the time and resources to commit to the development of experiences or achieving individual aspirations in the tourism sector has fallen down the priority list.

COUNCIL SEEN AS A BARRIER NOT AN ENABLER

Historically, the council was seen as a barrier to success and commercial opportunities within the district. This is a perception that current and recent staff have worked hard to change. Many council staff have built strong relationships with community leaders and this barrier is becoming less of an issue, but it was mentioned on more than one occasion.

The fundamental change that needs to be made is for the council not to be seen as 'red carpet and red tape', but as interactions where the community is encouraged and supported through the council processes to deliver positive outcomes for the people and place of Rangitikei.

URBAN DRIFT

Like many districts in Aotearoa, Rangitikei suffers from urban drift. Locals, and in particular younger people, leave the district in search of better educational or employment opportunities, or to follow different life pathways that cannot be nurtured within the district. This is the main reason behind the shared aspiration among the residents of Rangitikei to bring whanau home and enable them to live, work, and play within their hometowns.

STORIES THAT CANNOT BE SHARED

The desire to hear more stories goes hand in hand with the expectation that they are correct and have the blessings of those who own them to be told. For iwi within the district, this means having a deeper understanding of what stories can be shared, and what stories are for iwi alone. This understanding can provide the assurance that experiences being developed with strong cultural and historical importance have the backing of the story owner.

LACK OF ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation was mentioned as an issue on more than one occasion for both the visitor sector and workers. There is a lack of availability in terms of rental properties in the district and many workers must commute from other townships to attend their place of work. This, of course, has an impact on the delivery of experiences within the district, as well as the number of beds available for visitors.

THE DREADED C'S

Throughout the consultation process, the following barriers were consistently offered:

- **Compliance** – There is a lack of understanding and knowledge around what it takes to start a business and what levels of compliance would be required for individuals to achieve their tourism aspirations
- **Cost** – There is always the concern and barrier of what a tourism business might cost an individual or group to start up
- **Capability and confidence** – These go hand in hand. There is a fear among those in the district with tourism aspirations that they cannot run a tourism business, or lack the confidence to ensure it is sustainable.
- **Connectivity** – Lack of physical connectivity between the townships and rural areas of the district, as well as digital connectivity throughout the entire region
- **Capacity** – Although there is most definitely the desire to develop tourism experiences within the district, there is a lack of capacity for individuals to devote time to the endeavour.





Our Action Plans

The action plan for the Rangitīkei reflects those issues and opportunities that will enable the visitor economy to make a greater contribution to the wider community.

These actions assist the district in achieving the aspirations they have for the future. These aspirations are firmly linked with empowering people and caring for the natural assets of the Rangitīkei. They represent the combined view of local Māori, communities throughout the district, industry, stakeholders, and a level of desktop research, to assist in the articulation of the plans.

The key to the success of this destination management plan will be the recognition that it will take all levels of community involvement to start the journey towards the shared vision and aspirations.

VISION

A destination to live and visit with a strong identity, welcoming communities, and endless opportunities. The way life should be.

The actions outlined in the plan have been grouped into two areas of focus. These align with the aspects of the Rangitīkei district the community identified as being integral to the success of the destination management plan, the people, and the place.

FOCUS AREA ONE
MANAAKI TANGATA

FOCUS AREA TWO
MANAAKI WHENUA

FOCUS AREA ONE

MANAAKI TANGATA

Key Recommendations

ACTION PLAN

1.1 Establish and strengthen the Advisory Group that governs over the destination plan

RATIONALE

It will be of ongoing importance to ensure that there is leadership and a level of governance from within the community, key partners, and stakeholders over the delivery of the actions within this plan. This group should comprise a range of agencies, iwi, industry, sector leaders, and community leaders that can help ensure that these plans are being actioned. This group should also be available to assist with identifying potential funding and resourcing opportunities that may be offered, that can help achieve the actions outlined. The makeup of this group may change over time to reflect changes and developments to these actions, or potentially flex with the introduction of other disruptors, which may be local, environmental, natural, or global in nature.

1.2 Build working partnerships with iwi to achieve aspirations

During the consultation process, iwi identified a range of opportunities that they would like to pursue to achieve individual, hapū and whanau tourism aspirations. Focus should be given to working with these individuals, hapū and whanau, to develop implementation plans to achieve these aspirations. This will require strong iwi partnerships and will enable informed decision making, deliver positive impacts to communities, and provide opportunities for locals and visitors to better connect with tangata whenua.

1.3 Optimise current industry assets and invest in destination management

Explore the future needs and requirements of the visitor economy and align existing assets and resources to meet them, while optimising the benefits. This will include having a broader understanding of the role the i-SITES can provide for the sector, looking into what amenities are required into the future, including ablutions infrastructures and sites of significance and accommodation needs. There will be a need to allocate resourcing to the management of the destination, which should feature within the annual and long-term planning completed for the Rangitīkei. This would include dedicated staff and time, as well as budget to advance actions.

1.4 Empower personal and professional development programmes

To grow the visitor economy and see the positive impacts that can be derived from this sector for the community, a range of business development programmes should be offered. These should include working with those who are just starting up their businesses, through to existing operations looking to diversify their revenue streams.

There should also be a focus on assisting the development of whanau business development, with a strong Kaupapa Māori based approach critical to its success.

Key Recommendations

ACTION PLAN

1.5 Lift the capability of the visitor sector and support Qualmark Accreditation

1.6 Increase product supply through the development of engaging experiences

1.7 Develop a robust destination marketing strategy

1.8 Encourage collaboration

1.9 Develop an events strategy for the district

RATIONALE

Visitors expect a high level of customer service, visitor experience and engagement when they are paying for an experience. Ensuring that new and existing businesses are of a high enough standard to be seen as quality experiences will be integral to setting the destination apart from competitors and working with international trade markets.

There is a current lack of paid experiences within the Rangitīkei. A focus of this plan will be to identify opportunities and current gaps within the industry that will support the destination's unique positioning. These experiences should include – education products and itineraries, cultural experiences that tell the unique and compelling cultural stories of the district, cycling and walking tours, the arts and creative sector, and events.

Building the awareness of Rangitīkei district as a compelling visitor destination will be integral to the growth of the visitor economy and success of this destination management plan. These strategies should enable visitors to connect with the destination on an emotive level through the introduction of local people talking about the benefits of a Rangitīkei holiday and how to get the authentic Rangitīkei experience. This will also help build civic pride through the district.

There is a range of successful economic drivers and industries within the district, especially around the primary sector. There is the potential to develop experiences that enhance the primary production story within the region and vice versa. This would be mutually beneficial and could enable the development of cottage industries to grow. There is also a need to develop stronger relationships with regional partners to collaborate with, including neighbouring RTOs and EDAs.

Events are an economic enabler for the district. As such, they should be supported and encouraged to help the Rangitīkei derive true benefit, and to provide opportunities for local communities to connect. The district would benefit from the development of an events strategy that provides guidance to council on investment and development opportunities and from working with new and existing event providers to attract, grow, retain and build sustainable events for the district.



FOCUS AREA TWO

MANAAKI WHENUA

Key Recommendations

ACTION PLAN

2.1 Visitor-economy supports the environment

RATIONALE

There is a strong expectation from the community that the visitor-economy supports initiatives within the district to regenerate fragile environments. This is consistent with the growing need for visitors to give back to the destinations they are visiting and leave a legacy of their time in the district behind for future generations to enjoy. There are multiple avenues for what this support might look like, and this should be the short-term focus of the advisory group and stakeholders within the visitor sector. This should also include encouraging and supporting businesses to adopt the ethos underpinned by the TIA Sustainability Commitment and Tiaki promise.

2.2 Develop awareness of the destination's natural assets

The Rangitikei suffers from a lack of awareness. Visitors are unaware of what the destination offers, other than a corridor through the central North Island, north and south. Marketing campaigns that highlight the compelling natural assets within the destination, combined with the benefits defined in recommendation 1.7, and how visitors can engage with these landscapes through meeting the people and hearing the stories, should be employed to increase awareness.

2.3 Ensure visitors know where to go through increased wayfinding

The district is geographically long and covers a reasonable distance both on and adjacent to State Highway 1. Travellers on this arterial route will not know that there are stunning landscapes and rural vista areas that can be enjoyed a short distance from the main highway. Increased wayfinding that presents travellers and visitors with the opportunity to stop and experience these areas would be beneficial, and potentially increase the length of stay in the district.

2.4 Tell the stories in areas of significance

There are so many areas of significance within the district that have a story to tell. Interpretation panels that might give a window into what that story might be, and encourage them to seek the rest of the story, would provide benefits for the visitor-economy in the Rangitikei. This should also include panels on cycle and walkways that will add value to the experience and provide experience-development opportunities.

Key Recommendations

ACTION PLAN

2.5 Manage environmental impacts

RATIONALE

The effects of climate change on rural areas, including access to water, quality of drinking water and potential flooding from severe weather events, will have major impacts on the visitor economy. Managing these disruptors and developing clear scenario plans to assist with managing these effects will be vital for the sector. There are also areas in the district that experience a higher level of environmental impact than others. This includes along inland waterways, the main highway, and areas that enable freedom camping. These will need to be managed and regulated in order to mitigate impacts into the future.

2.6 Explore paid and unpaid options available for existing and potential walking and cycle tracks

Rangitikei has a range of accessible walkways and cycleways throughout the district that provide great experiences for locals and visitors, and breath-taking views across the district. With the increase in people looking to access the outdoors, and connect with the natural environment, there is potential to develop experiences through the district that could provide strong benefit back to the sector and the community.

2.7 Develop a heritage restoration plan for built heritage throughout the district

There are several heritage buildings throughout the district that need repair. Despite the potential cost, there is benefit in investing in the restoration of these assets, which have the potential to provide significant benefits and returns for the community. A plan to understand what that might look like through a visitor-economy lens, as part of a wider review of the built heritage within the district, would be of benefit.

