

Aotearoa New Zealand's First National Adaptation Plan

Abbas Alizadeh, TIA Policy & Insights Specialist

A key component of the government's climate change programme has been put in place with the launch of the First National Climate Change Adaptation Plan on 3 August 2022.

The Plan outlines the steps the government will take over the next six years to respond to climate change risks. It contains strategies, policies, and actions that will help New Zealanders adapt to the changing climate and its effects. It includes a combination of community-based initiatives and national-level policies and legislation that aim to reduce the potential harm of climate change as well as to seize the opportunities that arise.

This follows the May release of the Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) that focuses collective efforts toward transitioning to a low-emissions economy. Through the ERP, New Zealand has become one of the first nations to put into law the globally agreed target to limit global warming to 1.5°C. While the ERP is about reducing emissions, the Adaptation Plan is about dealing best with the climate changes that are certainly occurring. As noted by the Minister of Climate Change, James Shaw, "even with 1.5 degrees of warming, we are going to see the impacts of climate change on our communities and the way we live our lives"¹.

Together with land-based primary industries, fisheries, and aquaculture, the National Adaptation Plan identifies tourism as one of the Aotearoa New Zealand's most exposed industries as it depends on climate-sensitive natural resources. Some risks include flooding and extreme weather closing roads and walking tracks, droughts, less snowfall, higher temperatures, and rising sea levels.

With tourism being so integral to the New Zealand society and economy, the wellbeing of the industry is of very high priority. As such, TIA supports the overall framework being established so it can play the most effective role in supporting the tourism system in adapting to climate change.

The Plan has two tourism-specific Actions:

Action 10.14 (2022–2025): Deliver the Tourism Industry Transformation Plan (ITP). This Action points to the work MBIE is leading on the Tourism ITP which has regenerative tourism as its goal. The action requires completing the environment pillar of the Tourism ITP, including a roadmap for the industry on climate adaptation. TIA is involved in this process. A key input into this will be the work being led by the Aotearoa Circle on tourism climate adaptation and again TIA is involved. Going forward, the key for TIA is to stay closely involved in these processes to ensure they deliver powerful and practical outcomes to assist tourism adaptation.

Action 10.15 (2022–2024): Review the settings for the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL). This action requires that the settings for the IVL be reviewed to ensure international visitors contribute to resilient, adaptable infrastructure and the natural environment they use during their visit. While it is good to see the signalling that the IVL can be accessed for tourism adaptation, TIA's reservation is that

¹ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/first-ever-climate-adaptation-plan-lays-foundations-resilient-communities>

this fund will be insufficient for large-scale and capital-intensive adaptations that will very likely be needed at some point (e.g., replacing sea-level airports, re-routing low-lying coastal roads, and re-locating beach-side accommodation). As such, TIA believes that in addition to what can be drawn from the IVL, it must be signalled that there are other pathways for larger scale support for climate change adaptation as and when needed.

Overall, TIA supports the process that is set out in the National Adaptation Plan as tourism will be better served by having this comprehensive plan in place. This overall framework in the Adaptation Plan serves to activate the public sector and the national policy settings, which in turn helps industries like tourism to engage in the processes.