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Kia ora

### **TIA feedback on: Tongariro Alpine Crossing Sustainable Management Project – Carrying Capacity**

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Department of Conservation's discussion document on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Sustainable Management Project – Carrying Capacity.

TIA supports the conclusions reached in the consultation document not to cap numbers on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing at this stage.

#### **Tourism Industry Aotearoa**

TIA is the peak body for the tourism industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. With almost 1,300 member businesses, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including hospitality, accommodation, adventure activities, attractions, retail, airports and airlines, transport, as well as related-tourism services.

In consultation with the wider industry, TIA developed the tourism industry's national strategy, *Tourism 2050- A Blueprint for Impact*. Central to this is a vision for a tourism industry that delivers positively for Aotearoa New Zealand, our people, our economy and our environment, while providing world-class visitor experiences.

A central idea in Tourism 2050 lies with 'balanced growth' that involves shaping both the nature and capacity of our country as a destination, and those places within Aotearoa New Zealand where management intervention is needed to ensure desired outcomes across the cultural, social, environmental, and economic dimensions.

One of the ten Actions in Tourism 2050 is 'Transform Tourism and Conservation'. The intent behind this Action is firstly to optimise the existing tourism and conservation settings and secondly for industry to engage with DOC on how it can modernise these settings.

TIA sees the work to establish a sustainable management framework for the Tongariro Alpine Crossing fits directly with the intentions of Tourism 2050. This includes optimising the tools and levers available to ensure this special and iconic place is managed on a sustainable basis, for now and into the future.

#### **Support for the Process**

TIA has attended several online consultation meetings with DOC and relevant stakeholders to understand the background to the recommendations.

TIA commends DOC for the work it has established to develop and implement the management of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. In this, we recognise that there are many interests that need to be considered. We appreciate the long-term nature of the project and that it seeks to advance based on broad engagement and consultation, and with appropriate data and research. We view the current consultation on carrying capacity as being a part of this wider project.

We also see this project as an exemplar of the sort of process that can be put in place for other places around the country that require more intensive management.

### **Specific Feedback**

TIA recognises the need for DOC to manage the Tongariro Alpine Crossing in a way which enables locals and visitors to have a quality experience while upholding Māori values and nurturing a unique environment.

TIA supports the:

- Collection of further data about the usage of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing as we see this as being essential to informing the management of the site. We welcome identification of those areas where further data is needed, and we welcome the signalling that these gaps need to be filled to inform future decision-making.
- Extensive consultation that has been undertaken to draw in the views of key stakeholders, including with operators and Iwi.
- Economic impact assessment that highlights how the activity on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing flows across the community in terms of visitor spend and employment. Identifying the high impact cost of reduced capacity makes it clear what the implications of capacity-related decisions will be.
- Social impact assessment that finds a generally high level of visitor satisfaction, with some reduction on peak activity days where thresholds have been reached.
- Environmental impact assessment that highlights the areas of concern and the management response, and that these are not necessarily volume-dependent if the right measures are in place, particularly around toilet facilities.
- Booking system that has been established and the need to further bed this approach in and to explore how it can be used to influence off-peak usage.

With respect to the carrying capacity, TIA supports the approach set out to not impose limits at this time and bed in those base and peak management interventions that have been established. Gathering further data through this period will be important for informing the next set of decisions as and when needed.

TIA supports reviewing the position on an annual basis, or as numbers return to the 155,000 annual visitation level as suggested in the consultation document.

We also note the signals that mitigation initiatives (both infrastructure and management processes) will need to be funded appropriately, and this is well recognised by TIA, both with respect to Tongariro Alpine Crossing and more broadly across the tourism system.

### **TIA member feedback**

We have canvassed TIA members in the Taupo and Ruapehu regions. While the level of response was low, the feedback received was supportive of not imposing capacity limits and there was no feedback disagreeing with the proposal.

### **Conclusion**

We would be most happy to expand on any points raised in this submission so please get in contact if you have any queries.

Ngā mihi,



Rebecca Ingram  
Chief Executive