

# Ōpōtiki District Visitor Strategy 2014-2018

Final Report



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## Executive Summary

This Visitor Strategy has been developed for the Ōpōtiki District. Ōpōtiki has a solid base of domestic visitors coming to the district for camping over the peak summer period. Visitor numbers to the district have however declined significantly since 2010 and have only recently stabilised.

Ōpōtiki has a wealth of natural and cultural assets, but so do many destinations around New Zealand. Ōpōtiki lacks a positive destination image.

The District has been successful in developing a nationally significant cycle trail. Substantial investment has gone into this trail and it provides a serious opportunity to leverage the visitor industry and move it up a gear.

## Vision

The vision is for **Ōpōtiki to be regarded as a highly attractive destination for visitors - known for its stunning outdoor experiences, cultural heritage, relaxation and genuine warm hospitality.**

## Goal

The goal is to increase the value of the visitor industry to Ōpōtiki and to share Ōpōtiki's unique landscape and culture.

## Objective

The objective of the strategy is to **increase visitor expenditure in the Ōpōtiki district from \$21.81 million to \$25.1 million by 2018 (total of 15% increase)**

This will be achieved by:

- increasing visitor numbers
- increasing visitor length of stay, and
- increasing visitor satisfaction

## Key strategic areas:

The key strategic areas that will achieve the objective are:

1. Develop a strong and positive profile for the Ōpōtiki District
2. Develop quality visitor experiences and services
3. Support business development and the tourism environment

### **1. Develop a strong and positive profile for the Ōpōtiki District**

Ōpōtiki has limited marketing resource to be able to profile the district. It is essential that marketing resources available are used to maximum effect, and opportunities are identified to leverage this resource as much as possible. This includes revisiting the Ōpōtiki brand, supporting the Motu Trails Trust in its marketing activity, developing an iconic mass participation event, enhancing promotional content, working closely with marketing bodies and networks with a much wider reach, and developing positive news stories for distribution to local and national media.

### **2. Develop quality visitor experiences and services**

Ōpōtiki has a stunning natural landscape and rich culture, but how can visitors experience these? More experiences need to be developed to i) attract visitors, and ii) keep them in the district longer. This includes developing additional family friendly cycle trails, and other short duration activities to broaden the product offering, and facilitating the development of a broader range of quality dining and accommodation options to complete their holiday experience and establish Ōpōtiki as a destination.

### **3. Support business development and the tourism environment**

Visitor satisfaction with their Ōpōtiki experience is crucial to the growth of the sector. Positive word of mouth is the best form of marketing; especially with the popularity of social media where word travels very quickly and widely. Visitors are increasingly using their friends and other visitors for independent and unbiased travel advice. Attracting visitors to come back and visit again is also a better use of marketing funds than to try and attract new visitors. Supporting the development of SMEs so that they provide great visitor service, and getting the wider community to support tourism is an important step in achieving high visitor satisfaction. This includes up skilling SMEs, providing tourism operator networking opportunities, establishing a tourism advocacy group, providing cultural enhancements to Ōpōtiki's visitor experience, increasing local awareness and support of the tourism industry, establishing Ōpōtiki town as a visitor hub, improving the safety of cyclists on SH35, and developing a tool to measure visitor satisfaction.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Why a visitor strategy?

This Ōpōtiki Visitor Strategy has been developed with the following objectives:

1. grow the contribution of the visitor industry to the local economy,
2. increase visitor numbers, length of stay, and
3. increase visitor satisfaction.

It is vital that Ōpōtiki District has a clear path forward for the development of its tourism industry in order to achieve these objectives. Tourism can provide much needed income and employment to small and rural areas of New Zealand.

This is a critical time for Ōpōtiki. The District has been successful in developing a nationally significant cycle trail. Substantial investment has gone into this trail and it provides a serious opportunity to leverage the visitor industry and move it up a gear. Mōtū Trails sits alongside over 20 other cycle trails that have been developed nationally to promote New Zealand as a cycling destination. While Mōtū Trails has had early success in user's feedback there are some significant gaps in the experience that need to be addressed to maintain an advantage over other Trails. Ōpōtiki has a wealth of natural and cultural assets, but so do many destinations around New Zealand.

#### Who is the strategy for?

The strategy is facilitated by council but has a whole industry focus. Development of the strategy has sought public and private sector stakeholder input, and the actions require implementation by a number of stakeholders. A shared direction for the district will be vital for its success in the tourism sector.

The strategy dovetails with the Ōpōtiki Economic Development Strategy; specifically the following Priority Areas:

- I) Support Local Industry Growth, and
- II) Grow Visitor Economy

The strategy also aligns with the draft Motu Trails Charitable Trust Marketing Plan.

## 2 The New Zealand Tourism Industry

Tourism directly contributes \$7.3 billion (3.7%) to New Zealand's total GDP. A further \$9.8 billion (5%) is indirectly contributed. Tourism currently supports 110,800 full-time equivalent jobs (5.7% of the New Zealand workforce). International visitors spent a total of \$9.8 billion, and domestic visitors \$14.2 billion with a current growth rate of two percent per annum.<sup>1</sup>

The industry has recently released the national strategy – Tourism 2025 Growing Value Together/ Whakatipu Uara Ngatahi. The strategy provides a framework for the private sector to develop a collective direction (rather than collective actions), and focuses on growing the value of the tourism sector through productivity, an outstanding visitor experience, connectivity, and insight.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Domestic visitors

#### *Numbers*<sup>3</sup>

Domestic visitors undertook 31.1 million day trips, 16.6 million overnight trips and stayed 49.8 million nights in the year to December 2012. The main purpose of visit was holiday (16.8 million), followed closely by visiting friends and relatives (15.6 million), and then business (13.3 million).

#### *Spend*

For the year ended March 2013, domestic tourism expenditure increased 2.4% (\$328 million) to \$14.2 billion. The growth in domestic visitor expenditure has outperformed international expenditure for the last seven years<sup>4</sup>.

The average spend per day trip was \$118, overnight trip \$372, and per night \$124<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics New Zealand, Tourism Satellite Account, year ended March 2013

<sup>2</sup> [www.tourism2025.org.nz](http://www.tourism2025.org.nz)

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Business, innovation & Employment, Domestic Travel Survey, year ended December 2012

<sup>4</sup> Statistics New Zealand

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Business, innovation & Employment, Domestic Travel Survey, year ended December 2012

## 2.2 International visitors

### *Arrivals*<sup>6</sup>

New Zealand currently receives 2,769,436 arrivals per annum, an increase of seven percent on the previous year. Forecasts indicate that this number is expected to increase to 3.1 million by 2019 (an increase of 2.9% compound annual growth). The average intended length of stay is 19.4 days. The key markets are currently Australia, China, the UK, the USA and Japan. These markets are expected to remain the top five for at least the next five years.

### *Spend*<sup>7</sup>

The average expenditure per person per trip was \$2,760.

### *Market segments*

Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) has identified the target market for New Zealand as “Active Considerers”. These people are not just aware of New Zealand and interested in coming here 'some day'; they already have New Zealand on their list of preferred future holiday destinations. They are also aged over 18 and are willing to spend a minimum set amount on their holiday here.

Within this overarching target market, and of particular relevance to Ōpōtiki and this visitor strategy, TNZ has a focus on specific sectors, and special interest. Visitors who participate in special interest activities have been identified as spending more and staying longer than average visitors. Cycling and mountain biking has been identified as a special interest sector<sup>8</sup>. TNZ, in association with the New Zealand Cycle Trail Network (NZCT) are actively targeting:

- Recreational cyclists aged 45 and over from Australia, UK, USA and Germany who view nature/scenic attractions as key reasons for travel. These visitors are generally well-travelled, financially secure and very keen to experience other activities alongside their cycling experience.
- Mountain biking enthusiasts aged 25-40 from Australia who are looking for new challenges and thrills. These visitors generally travel in small groups and may seek extra adrenaline filled, competitive activities to complement their mountain biking experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics New Zealand, International Travel and Migration, year ended February 2014

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Business, innovation & Employment, International Visitor Survey, year ended February 2014 – excludes international airfares

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/sector-marketing/special-interest/cycling-and-mountain-biking/>



### 3 Regional Tourism<sup>9</sup>

#### Eastland region

The Eastland region receives approximately:

- 153,155 visitors per annum, with an average length of stay of 2.13 nights
- 326,153 guest nights (269,850 domestic, 56,303 international nights)

Ōpōtiki District currently sits within the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) of Tourism Eastland, but ODC do not currently financially contribute to the RTO (except for a minimal membership fee). Tourism Eastland currently has a marketing budget of \$150,000. They support the Central North Island Mountain Biking Tourism Marketing Network (CMBTMN) (refer section 4.8) and will contribute \$2000 to establishing the network. They are members of EXplore Central New Zealand/ Pacific Coast Highway.<sup>10</sup> Ōpōtiki is included in the Out East visitor guide and maps, the website ([www.gisbornenz.com](http://www.gisbornenz.com)), Discover publication, TRENZ representation, media visits, and other Eastland advertising and promotions (eg Arrival magazine, Rhythm and Vines Survival Guide).

The Tourism Eastland Strategy 2012-2017 – Out East, focuses on the brand values of simplicity, unity, honesty and realness.

#### Bay of Plenty region

The Bay of Plenty region receives approximately:

- 413,318 visitors per annum, with an average length of stay of 2.59 nights
- 1,069,525 guest nights (797,925 domestic, 271,600 international nights)

Tourism Bay of Plenty (the RTO for most of the Bay of Plenty area) currently extends to Whakatane in the east. They currently spend \$200,000 on domestic marketing, and over \$70,000 on international marketing per annum. The unique selling point for the region is being able to experience city life and the quiet beach all in the one area – laidback sophistication. They support the CMBTMN and will contribute \$5,000 to establishing network. They are members of EXplore Central North Island/ Pacific Coast Highway.

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<sup>9</sup> Figures based on Statistics New Zealand, Commercial Accommodation Monitor, year ended March 2014 (excludes holiday houses and staying with friends and family)

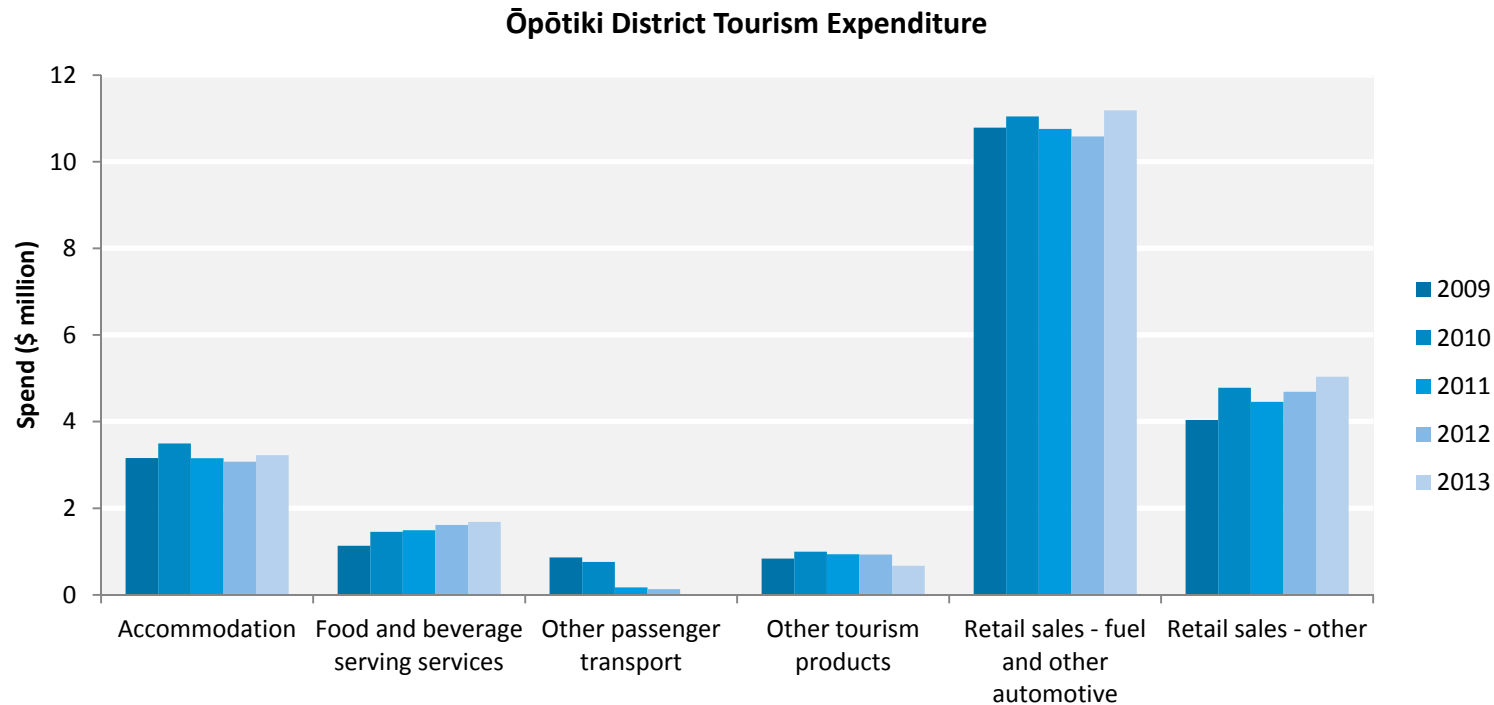
<sup>10</sup> [www.explorecentralnorthislandnz.com](http://www.explorecentralnorthislandnz.com)

## 4 The Ōpōtiki Tourism Industry

### 4.1 Contribution to the Ōpōtiki economy

The visitor industry contributes \$21.8 million to the Ōpōtiki District per annum. This has remained relatively stable over the past five years. Fuel is the main category of expenditure (refer figure 1), followed by other retail and then accommodation. The majority, \$20.1 million, is from domestic visitors, and \$1.7 million from international visitors.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1 — Ōpōtiki District Total Visitor Expenditure



<sup>11</sup> Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, year ending March

## 4.2 Marketing – products and promotions

The Ōpōtiki District Council supports tourism in the form of providing infrastructure and facilities for visitors, including:

- recreation reserves and outdoor event venues (Council reserves have had recent upgrades so that they are attractive venues for a range of events organised by volunteers, for example Muriwai Tournament, Mōtū Challenge, and Show jumping (the past 2 years)).
- public toilets at visitor locations
- bike trails and walking trails
- the leasing of reserves for commercial campgrounds
- ‘freedom camping’ at selected locations

Council also run the i-SITE visitor centre which undertakes basic promotions in the form of brochures, a website, and press releases, and has recently facilitated and/or hosted a number of small events (eg Summer Festival, Art in the Park, The Dunes Dash). These events add to the visitor and community experience, which indirectly adds to the visitor economy.

There are no large tourism businesses currently operating in Ōpōtiki. Most of the businesses have a brochure and website, and only a few are listed on other travel intermediaries’ websites (eg [newzealand.com](http://newzealand.com), [www.explorecentralnorthislandnz.com](http://www.explorecentralnorthislandnz.com)).

In addition to the promotional activity undertaken by the i-SITE, Council, Tourism Eastland (refer section 3), and the Motu Trails Charitable Trust (refer section 4.8), the Ōpōtiki & District 10,000 Club publish a popular travel guide on an annual basis – the Pacific Coast Highway Guide, covering the Ōpōtiki, Gisborne and Wairoa districts.

There is not much scope for Council to obtain extra funding for tourism due to the low rating base and infancy of the tourism sector for targeted rates.



### ***The Harbour Redevelopment***

A significant opportunity for Ōpōtiki and also a game changer in terms of the visitor industry is the harbour redevelopment. The Harbour Redevelopment is a project to build twin groynes and associated works, creating a year-round navigable harbour entrance at Ōpōtiki. The project is an enabling project for Whakatōhea's aquaculture proposal and other marine activities<sup>12</sup>.

The harbour redevelopment will allow Ōpōtiki to host maritime activities and attract a wide range of tourism operators – both new and already established, to utilise the safe moorings as their base (for example, charter fishing and diving trips, marine life and scenic cruises, sailing trips). The water based visitor activities would complement the land based cycle trail product very well.

The planning and construction phase of the harbour redevelopment also has the potential to have a positive impact on the visitor industry. Not only will there be a requirement to accommodate people working on the project, but any accommodation, food and beverage and other services built to service the planning and construction phase will benefit the visitor industry in the longer term in areas where there are currently gaps. Business cases for developing accommodation and other services may be more attractive to potential investors with this initial influx of visitors.

Last year, Bay of Plenty Regional Council pledged \$18million to the project and the District Council is seeking to match this funding with support from central government.

This project will have significant impacts on the visitor industry in Ōpōtiki. This visitor strategy will therefore need to be revised once the project is confirmed.

### ***The Ōpōtiki Public Library***

There are plans to redevelop the town's public library. The function of the library will be broader than its traditional use. It will celebrate culture and heritage, reinvigorate the central business district, and has the potential to become a welcome place for visitors, an introduction to the district, whilst potentially providing some visitor services such as Wi-Fi. Plans are subject to funding.

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<sup>12</sup> For detailed information please refer [www.odc.govt.nz/council/strategic-projects-and-development/](http://www.odc.govt.nz/council/strategic-projects-and-development/)

### 4.3 The Ōpōtiki district - visitor experience

The Ōpōtiki district has a wealth of natural and cultural assets attractive to visitors.

- Long sandy beaches with no obvious signs of development
- Rivers
- Large tracts of native bush managed by DOC
- Natural harbour

Visitor products and services are still in their infancy. Core products and experiences currently include:

- Motu Trails Cycle trail
- Bush walks
- Museum and the 'Historic Heart'
- Mōtū Challenge (annual event)
- The Pacific Coast Highway touring route (SH35 around 'the coast')
- The Waioeka road journey
- Recreational fishing – land based and boat sea fishing, and freshwater river fishing
- Events: for example, Mōtū Challenge, The Dunes Dash, Ōpōtiki Charity Concert, Muriwai Tournament (Pa Wars), Silent Film Festival, Fibre & Fleece, Rodeo, Big Three, Trash & Treasure, Delemare Cup, Ōpōtiki Showjumping.



The Ōpōtiki district currently has basic visitor services and infrastructure:

- Motels – there are a few motels, with only one truly servicing the visitor industry. All motels are located on the main road (ie not *destination* motels)
- Holiday parks – there are five holiday parks located within ten minutes of Ōpōtiki, one in town and four on the coast. They are only at capacity for a few weeks after Christmas. Visitor feedback on the three parks included on Trip Advisor is outstanding, with close to 100% satisfaction ratings.
- State Highway 35 (Pacific Coast Highway) of which 140km is within the Ōpōtiki district, with a select range of accommodation and eating options.
- Food and beverage – there are only a few dining options in Ōpōtiki, many with inconsistent service, limited opening hours, and a lack of variety.
- Bachs – there are quite a few privately owned holiday homes available for rent in the Ōpōtiki district. Book-a-bach alone has 10 properties listed in Ōpōtiki and a further 12 in Te Kaha. Nearly all of the properties have a very high satisfaction rate, with visitors mostly rating them 9

or 10 out of 10. There generally appears to be good summer occupancy, and some also have good winter occupancy. Many positive comments are made about the hosts, showing that holiday houses provide a positive aspect to the Ōpōtiki visitor experience and are not mainly owners from outside the Ōpōtiki district that is often the case in other regions. These properties are mostly in beautiful locations.

### 4.3.1 The Motu Trails

The Motu Trails<sup>13</sup> is a cycle trail that consists of three trails of varying levels of experience – a dunes trail, linked by scenic back-country roads to a native bush trail. Motu trails opened in 2012 and provides a new and significant opportunity for Ōpōtiki to showcase its beautiful natural environment and strong Maori culture to visitors.

The following figures provide an indication of track use at various points for the year to mid-April 2014<sup>14</sup>:

- 19,105 at the Pakowhai ki Otutaopuku bridge
- 17,054 at Hikuwai beach
- 13,749 at Snells Beach
- 2,931 on the Pakihi (previous years: 2012: 2,000; 2013: 2,736; 2014: 2,931)

User numbers on the Pakihi track shows a solid year on year increase.

Research<sup>15</sup> was undertaken within the Motu Trails' first year of operation.

Key recommendations from the research included:

- additional trails are required in the district to extend overnight stays
- that greater promotion of the trail was required (both to potential users and to local businesses looking at how their product could complement the trail), and
- improved linkages with other trails and with population centres

The following summary points provide a snap shot of early users of the trail (research was undertaken in the trail's first season):

- Visitors were mostly New Zealanders (89%), from the Bay of Plenty (38%), Auckland, Waikato (16%) and Wellington (13%).
- 5% were from Australia



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<sup>13</sup> [www.motutrails.co.nz](http://www.motutrails.co.nz)

<sup>14</sup> Note: Dunes Trail figures will include many two-way counts. Dunes Trail trend analysis from trust counters is not yet possible but DOC counters provide a trend for the Pakihi

<sup>15</sup> New Zealand Cycle Trail Evaluation – Four Cycle Trail Case Studies, Angus and Associates in association with TRC Tourism on behalf of the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2013

- High proportion of 40-54 year olds, many are married couples with kids at home (44%)
- Mainly heard about the trail through friends and family (51%)
- High proportion said the trail was the only reason to visit (42%)
- The scenery/landscape, the newness, that it was recommended, and the location and convenience were the reasons they chose the trail
- Many travelled in small groups without children
- At least half of the visitors did not stay a night in Ōpōtiki area
- They mostly stayed in holiday parks (44%)
- Only 8% were walking the trail
- Only 14% completed the loop – most did the Pakihi and/or the Dunes trail
- The average time spent on the trail was 1-4 hours (44%), and 4-8 hours (40%)
- Visitors specific to the trail spent on average \$178 (domestic) and \$127 (international) per trip, and \$133 (domestic) and \$135 (international)
- Overall visitor satisfaction with their trail experience was very high (81% very satisfied, 14% satisfied)
- The aspect they enjoyed the most was the scenery
- They have a high propensity to return (48% of visitors very likely)
- They have a high propensity to recommend (79% very likely)

The businesses surveyed in the research identified that:

- 10% of businesses opened after the trail opened
- 16% expanded their business since the trail opened
- There was a slight increase in business (14% increase in customers, 8% increase in customer spend, 13% increase in turnover, 14% increase in business expenditure, and 11% increase in profit)
- There was a 2% increase in part time employment
- Many businesses reported not seeing any benefits from the trail yet

Given the survey was undertaken in the trails first year of operation, these results are encouraging.

There are high seasonal fluctuations, with December, January and February the peak months.

It is hoped that this research will be repeated – once the trail is more established, and results compared with these initial findings.



## 4.4 Visitors

There are more than 34,647 visitors to Ōpōtiki per annum<sup>16</sup>. The i-SITE alone receives approximately 14,000 visitors per annum. Visitors staying in Ōpōtiki have fluctuated over the years, with a peak of 43,716 arrivals in recent years (2010), declining steadily until the end of 2012, and recently stabilising and showing signs of growth (over the past two years).

The length of stay for visitors in the Ōpōtiki district is an average of 2.77 days, fluctuating between 2.3 and 2.9 days over recent years.<sup>17</sup>

Current visitors to Ōpōtiki principally include:

- New Zealand families camping at Ōpōtiki beaches during the peak summer period, staying an average of ten days.
- The retired New Zealand market travelling mainly in the shoulder seasons, often by campervan, touring around the East Cape, and generally staying the night in Ōpōtiki.
- A small but growing number of cyclists/ mountain bikers coming specifically for the Motu trails – Couples and some families from New Zealand, day trippers and overnighters, and a very small and emerging group of Australian mountain bikers tagging on Motu trails to their Rotorua mountain biking weekend (not staying overnight in Ōpōtiki).
- A small amount of touring Europeans (backpackers and campervans mostly from Germany)
- Seasonal workers – projected to grow by 60% over the next 4 years
- People who come for recreational fishing – freshwater trout fishing, and beach and boat based sea fishing

## 4.5 Visitor Flows

There are three main feeder towns where visitors travel from (not originate from) to get to Ōpōtiki – Rotorua, Tauranga/Mt Maunganui and Gisborne.

Ōpōtiki is not currently well established as a visitor destination in its own right. The majority of visitors pass through Ōpōtiki on-route to or from Gisborne, Western Bay of Plenty and Rotorua, which are all less than two hours' drive away (refer figure 2).

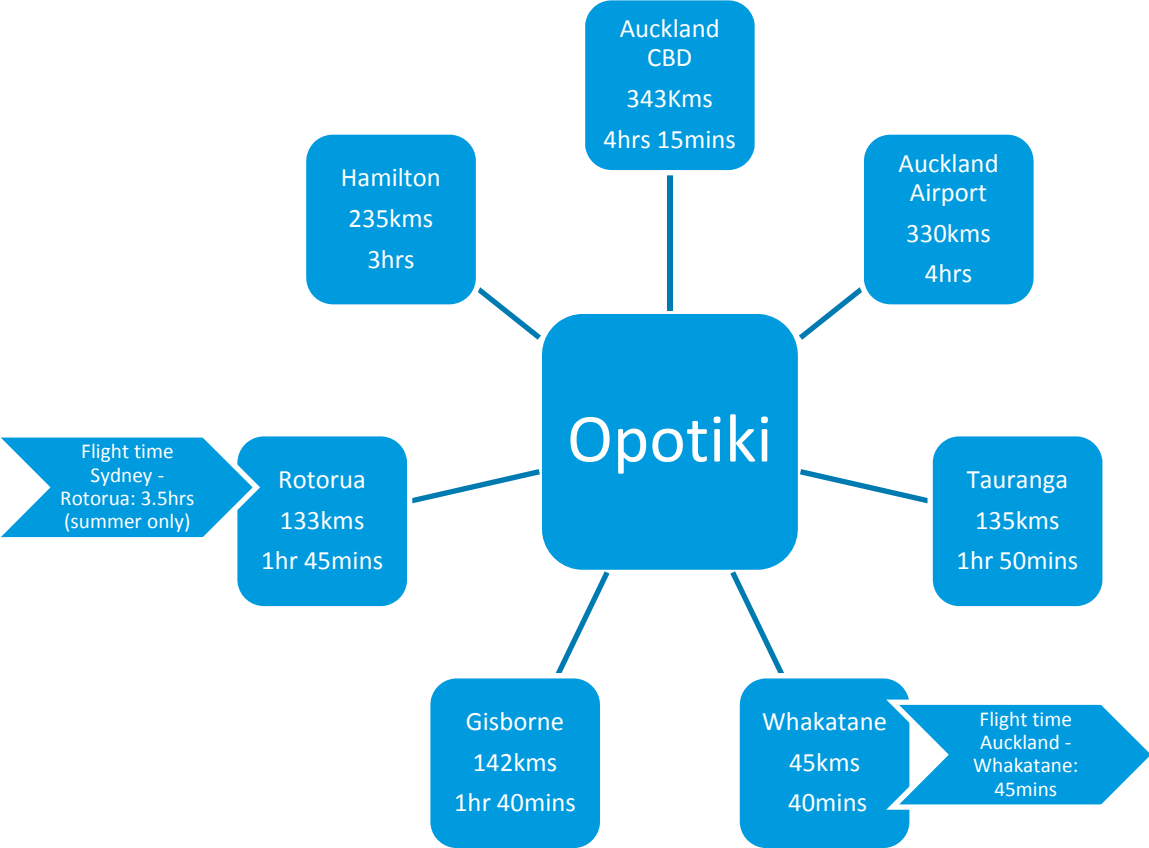
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<sup>16</sup> This figure is based on the Commercial Accommodation Monitor data only (year ended May 2014). It excludes holiday house accommodation and staying with friends and family. The actual figure of visitors to Ōpōtiki is therefore much higher.

<sup>17</sup> Commercial Accommodation Monitor, year ended May 2014 (Ōpōtiki has between 16 and 20 establishments supplying data to the monitor)



Figure 2 — Travel distances and times to and from Ōpōtiki



## 4.6 Perceptions of Ōpōtiki

There is a significant gap between perceptions of Ōpōtiki and the reality. Once visitors have actually visited Ōpōtiki, their feedback<sup>18</sup> is overwhelmingly positive - including peaceful, relaxing, laid back friendly people, and stunning landscapes. However, perceptions of Ōpōtiki amongst the general public<sup>19</sup> are mostly not positive (high crime rates, unsafe, intimidating) or they have no associations at all (as in they don't really know anything about the place). The district has suffered from negative press in the past that has stuck in the minds of some (eg an attack on a German tourist, and a domestic abuse incident). While other destinations suffer from a higher incidence of criminal activity (for instance, Rotorua), this is often diluted and forgotten more easily amongst the other news coming out of these places.

## 4.7 Ōpōtiki Brand

The ODC has previously undertaken work to identify the unique values of the Ōpōtiki District (refer to Appendix 2), and developed a brand logo and tag line - Ōpōtiki Coast by Nature - that is used on council and some private sector communications.

*Ōpōtiki and the Coast are one.*

*The people of ŌpōtikiCoast have a uniquely different character that includes the friendly, laid-back style of a coastal community.*

*ŌpōtikiCoast has a strong Maori heritage, its natural environment is pristine, and features mountains, rivers and ocean playgrounds. People live close to and enjoy what nature provides and we believe that nature has not only shaped the place we live in but also the people we are.*

*We are proud of who we are and where we come from. We are .*



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<sup>18</sup> Based on resident and tourism business operator feedback, and secondary sources such as trip advisor, bookabach, and facebook

<sup>19</sup> This is anecdotal evidence based on what residents have heard and based on general conversations the consultants have had. No primary research was undertaken

## 4.8 Ōpōtiki District stakeholders and regional partners

*Motu Trails Charitable Trust* – The Trust’s function is to market and promote the Motu Trails through an agreement with ODC, Gisborne District Council, DOC and Whakatōhea Maori trust Board (the latter three partners do not directly financially contribute). The Trust operates an official partner’s programme for cycle friendly operators, by subscription (with a requirement to meet certain standards). Funding for the Trust is sourced from ODC, the Lion foundation and other ad hoc trusts.

*Toi-EDA* – Is the economic development agency for the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Tourism is not currently a core focus but they do support initiatives that contribute to the development of the tourism industry at the regional level.

*Whakatōhea Maori Trust Board* - The Board's business activities are based in and around Ōpōtiki and spread across various industries including agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. While the Trust support tourism activities and have provided input, for example, into the Motu Trails (ie interpretation, land access consultation), tourism has not been identified as a strategic economic area.

*Department of Conservation* – DOC manage a large amount of the visitor resource in the district. They have a presence in the i-SITE in Ōpōtiki but this is currently under review.

*Regional Tourism Organisation* – Ōpōtiki is currently promoted under the Tourism Eastland Regional Tourism Organisation but it does not contribute financially (except for a small membership fee). Ōpōtiki is represented in the EXplore Central North Island marketing alliance via Tourism Eastland.

*EXplore Central North Island* – A travel trade focused marketing network formed by central north island RTOs that covers the touring routes of the Pacific Coast Highway (SH35 is part of this – refer figure 3), the Thermal Explorer Highway, and the Volcanic loop.

*Central North Island Mountain Biking Tourism Marketing Network (CMBTMN)* – This recently established marketing network (modelled on the Ski tourism marketing network) includes eight central north island RTOs and is working closely with TNZ to promote the central cycle trails. The network has secured enough funding to employ a marketing executive and implement the first phase of its strategy – foundation building of trail information and imagery to feed into TNZ etc., and to develop a web portal for the trails. The network will seek funding from a number of funds available to further implement the marketing plan. Motu Trails is currently contributing financially to the network via a Toi EDA grant and Tourism Eastland. The network has indicated that Motu Trails will be an equal and core trail within the network irrespective of its financial contribution.

Figure 3 — Explore Central North Island touring routes



## 5 Strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities for Ōpōtiki District

Table 1 — Strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities for Ōpōtiki District

Strengths	Weaknesses
The natural environment as a basis for tourism - untouched coast, rural, untouched native bush	Negative perception of Ōpōtiki within New Zealand generally (rough, unsafe)
Current visitors say Ōpōtiki is a peaceful, relaxing and a laid back place	Ōpōtiki not widely perceived as a visitor destination. No clear brand identity
The newly developed Motu Trails – nationally significant project, and a key drawcard to attract visitors to Ōpōtiki	Perceived remoteness (also viewed as a strength depending on visitor market)
The climate – can cycle all year round which you can't do on all the Great Rides	Ōpōtiki is on the periphery of three Regional Tourism Organisations. The focus of each of the RTOs will naturally be with their main centre, and main funder
Prolific birdlife (eg weka, blue duck)	Limited ODC funds for tourism marketing and lack of large tourism companies to undertake private sector marketing
	<p>Limited range of accommodation and dining options</p> <p>Especially accommodation on the Motu Trail itself – to encourage longer length of stay</p>
	Inconsistent customer service – not meeting visitor expectations

Threats	Opportunities
Adverse news stories creating a negative reputation for Ōpōtiki – Ōpōtiki has been affected by this in the past	Leverage off the initial success of the Motu Trails cycle way – in terms of developing a stronger visitor destination profile (marketing), additional attractions and services etc, and additional cycle trails
Feedback from visitors unsatisfied with current level of visitor infrastructure and services (eg evening dining options, range of accommodation)	Tauranga Eastern Arterial route – will make Ōpōtiki 20 minutes closer to Tauranga and Auckland. To be completed in 2016. Good for the weekend market and day-trippers.
Limited marketing and promotions budget of ODC	The cultural, historical and natural (eg weka) richness of Ōpōtiki – to add to the visitor experience
Unsecured ongoing funding for Motu Trails Trust	Local personalities who are well known for taking their can do/ self reliance/ cheeky and fun attitude to the world
Logging trucks through town and along coastal road. The coastal road, which is a great standalone cycle trip or an add on cycle trip to the Motu Trails is now not as attractive for cycling	The success of events in the district
DOC manage a large amount of the visitor resource in the district, however funds for the further development of visitor facilities and the promotion of this resource is uncertain	Strong growth in participation of mountain biking in New Zealand, and growth by visitors to New Zealand participation in cycling
	Strengthen marketing by aligning with bigger and more established organisations (eg RTO's / CMBTMN)



## 6 The Vision for Ōpōtiki

### Vision:

**ŌPŌTIKI IS REGARDED AS A HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE DESTINATION FOR VISITORS - KNOWN FOR ITS STUNNING OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES, CULTURAL HERITAGE, RELAXATION AND GENUINE WARM HOSPITALITY**

### Goal:

To increase the value of the visitor industry to Ōpōtiki and to share Ōpōtiki's unique landscape and culture.

### Objective:

The objective of the strategy is to **increase visitor expenditure in the Ōpōtiki district from \$21.81 million to \$25.1 million by 2018 (total of 15% increase)**

This will be achieved by:

- increasing visitor numbers
- increasing visitor length of stay, and
- increasing visitor satisfaction

### Key strategic areas:

The key strategic areas that will achieve the objective are:

4. Develop a strong and positive profile for the Ōpōtiki District
5. Develop quality visitor experiences and services
6. Support business development and the tourism environment

## 7 Target markets

Table 2 — Targets markets for Ōpōtiki District

Target market	Why?	Product fit
Domestic families	Many families already coming camping at Ōpōtiki over the peak summer period. There is potential to increase the season	Affordable accommodation Family friendly cycle trails Family friendly events
Domestic active couples (from key population centres)	Couples with discretionary incomes seeking new and moderately active activities for weekend breaks, often with a group of friends.  Take short breaks all year round.	Cycle trails Cycle events Holiday house accommodation
Retired domestic visitors	New Zealand has an aging population, many of who are active and fit and looking for moderately physical outdoor activities that may also offer a social aspect. They have the time to tour around.  Travel at any time of the year.	Cycle trails Pacific Coast Highway Walking tracks
International touring visitors from traditional markets (UK, Europe, Australia, US)	More likely to get off the beaten track More likely to participate in an active activity  Ōpōtiki not yet set up to cater to emerging markets	Cycle trails Walking tracks Pacific Coast Highway
Australian mountain bikers	Actively seek out new and exciting trails (so not difficult to market to), and only require basic infrastructure and services.	Cycle trails

## 8 Strategic Focus Areas

### 8.1 Develop a strong and positive profile for the Ōpōtiki District

WHY?

Ōpōtiki has limited marketing resource to be able to profile the district. It is essential that marketing resources available are used to maximum effect, and opportunities are identified to leverage this resource as much as possible.

Ōpōtiki District's strengths from a visitor perspective are the relatively untouched coastal landscape, native bush, its culture, and the relaxed, rural, laidback vibe.



#### Develop the Ōpōtiki brand

The existing brand could have a lot more depth to it. The visitor industry could champion this. As it currently stands, there is a brand logo and tagline and a few paragraphs identifying the values of Ōpōtiki. The whole visitor industry (and wider Ōpōtiki) should ideally deliver on the brand values through how they interact with visitors and by providing quality visitor experiences. The current brand is not used on all communications – for example the Motu Trails brochure uses the Council's logo along with the tagline “Strong Community Strong Future”.

### **Establish Ōpōtiki as a cycle destination**

Ōpōtiki District currently has a significant opportunity to gain profile for the district by supporting and leveraging off the Motu Trails. The trail uses the strengths of the region – it allows visitors to experience the amazing landscape and culture, and the trail benefits from the strong national profile of the cycle trails and marketing opportunities that the region would otherwise not have access to (eg cycle network, profile on national cycleway website, profile on TNZ’s website, potential joint marketing funds from TNZ and other sources to the cycle network).

Implementation of the Motu Trails Trust marketing plan will go a long way towards achieving this. Funding for the Trust needs to be secured.

Rotorua has done a fantastic job at positioning itself as a mountain biking mecca. Ōpōtiki’s mountain biking experience is quite different to Rotorua’s but it provides the opportunity to establish Ōpōtiki as a cycle destination – complementary to Rotorua. The focus for experienced adventure riders would be a rural, off the beaten track, native bush biking experience, and for the family market, easy, coastal trails. A strong cultural element is present across all trails.

Opportunities exist to make Ōpōtiki a more cycle friendly town (eg bike racks near key services), and the development of additional trails (refer to product development section 8.2). In the interim, before more trails are developed, wider promotion of quiet and scenic back roads would add to the cycling product.

Cycling is a popular and growing activity, and not many regions in New Zealand have quality cycle trails such as the Motu – although this is now changing. Walking is still however more accessible to a larger market and the number one outdoor activity in New Zealand. Joint use of the Motu trails (where safe), in addition to other walking tracks should have a significant presence in Ōpōtiki promotions.

### **Use events to help establish Ōpōtiki as a cycle destination**

The Motu Challenge is a successful multi-sport event for the adventure racing market. An additional option was developed to only include a mountain and a road bike (taking out the river kayak). This event attracts a good number of people given the size of Ōpōtiki and its infrastructure. To gain exposure for Ōpōtiki in the more family orientated biking market there is an opportunity to develop a mountain bike only event for mass participation. Having a specific mountain biking only event, potentially utilising the easy grade and stunning coastal dune ride, will make it accessible to a large target market. To gain maximum profile for this event, and hence Ōpōtiki, a professional event management company<sup>20</sup> with experience in the establishment and successful running of sports events could be sought. This company will have an existing and extensive database of potential participants to market to. Alternatively, an existing event such as the Dunes Dash could be further developed and promoted.

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<sup>20</sup> for example Total sport, [www.totalsport.co.nz](http://www.totalsport.co.nz), who run the Colville Connection on the Coromandel, or [Sportsimpact.co.nz](http://Sportsimpact.co.nz), or [www.eventpromotions.co.nz](http://www.eventpromotions.co.nz) (Great Lake Taupo Relay)

This event is a running and walking event along the dunes cycle trail. The popular but small event already attracts a broad visitor base and it is accessible to a wide market. While the event is not a cycle event, it increases the profile of the Dunes and Motu Trails and Ōpōtiki in general.

### **Secure and utilise existing partners and networks with wider reach**

Promotion of Ōpōtiki district via overarching marketing bodies (eg RTOs, EXplore Central North Island/ Pacific Coast Highway) has been limited. This is mainly due to three factors: 1) the lack of market ready and unique product in Ōpōtiki that is able to be promoted, 2) lack of financial contribution by Ōpōtiki to these marketing bodies, and 3) the geographical distance from where agency efforts are focused (eg Gisborne for Tourism Eastland).

Ōpōtiki is still best placed to partner and be members of these marketing bodies/ networks in order to gain maximum exposure for Ōpōtiki district. It now has an opportunity to gain increased profile in these marketing bodies/networks by leveraging off the Motu Trails as an iconic experience to draw people to the region. It is a good time for Ōpōtiki to re look at how it is aligned regionally.

To be a member of Explore and The Pacific Coast Highway, Ōpōtiki needs to under the umbrella of an RTO. RTOs also undertake other domestic and international marketing. Visitors are generally not aware of district and regional boundaries (except for how destinations are organised in planning resources). Geographically, Ōpōtiki sits within the Bay of Plenty, but experience wise, Ōpōtiki district is arguably more aligned with Tourism Eastland's (TE) brand values (simplicity, unity, honesty and realness). Ōpōtiki could also potentially fit with Tourism Bay of Plenty's values (the laid back value, rather than the sophistication value). Both RTOs are members of the newly formed CMBTMN and EXplore Central North Island, albeit at varying levels. Ōpōtiki district has the choice of potentially working with TE on a project-by-project basis<sup>21</sup> (eg individual promotional opportunities, the Eastland visitor's guide, mobile phone app for the East Cape Coast road), or buy in to TBOP, which would be negotiated depending on the level of representation and services expected, but not on a project-by-project basis. As an indication of the level of resource potentially required, Whakatane DC have initially paid \$50,000 per annum, and this is likely to increase.

Either way, ODC needs to secure additional funding for tourism promotion.

In terms of mountain biking, Ōpōtiki is best placed to work together with Destination Rotorua Marketing (DRM) (ie in the form of joint venture marketing). This type of activity, and other Motu Trails related activity should fall within the marketing activity of the MTCT and the CMBTMN. DRM would require a key contact person to work with and the presentation of a concept paper to their council. A great example of working with Rotorua is the development of the mountain biking DVD targeting the Australian market – 'Mad If You Don't' (a sequel to the popular 'Be Rude Not To') a joint promotion initiated by Rotorua International airport and supported by a number of central north island RTOs and Tourism New Zealand.

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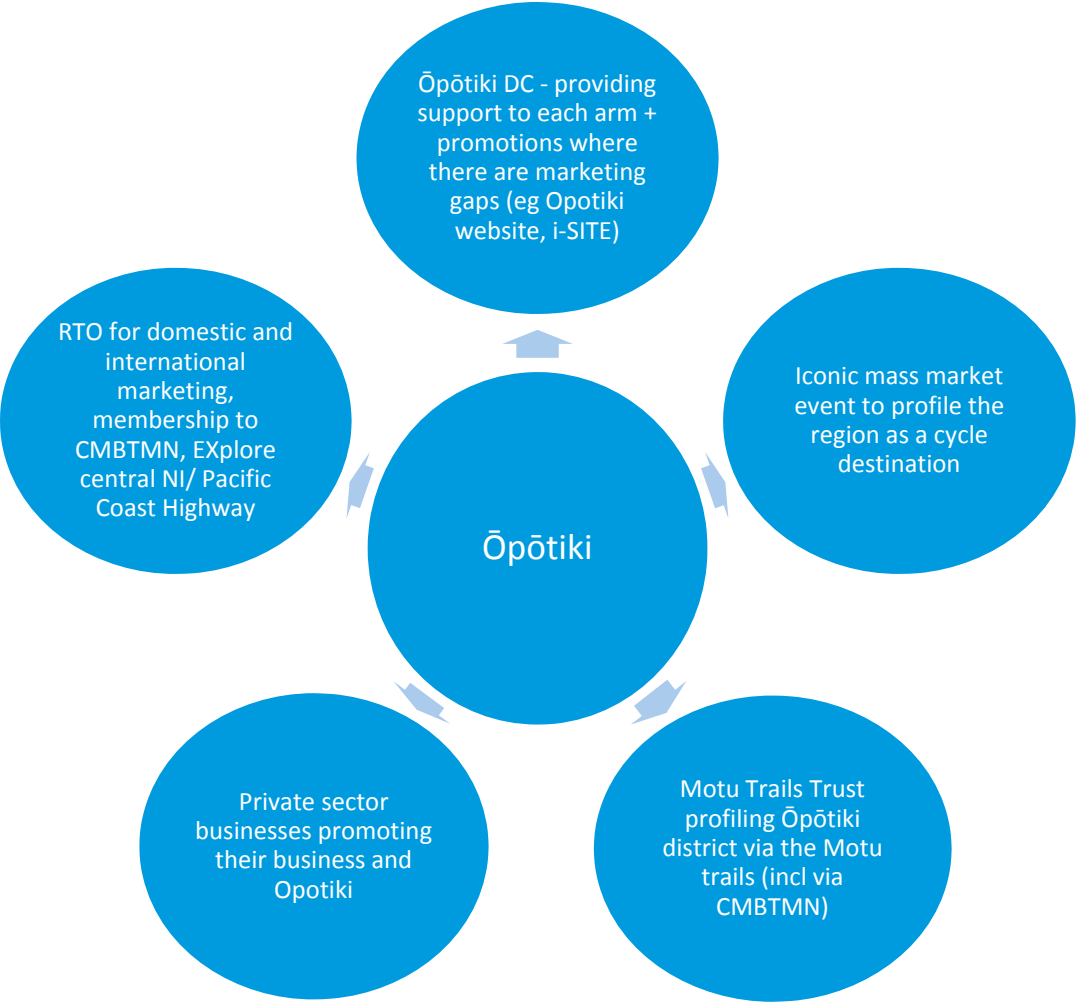
<sup>21</sup> Note: Tourism Eastland are about to re-negotiate their service agreement

It is important for Ōpōtiki district that the MTCT secures ongoing funding in order to be able to undertake these types of activities either directly or via the CMBTMN.

Financial contribution to the CMBTMN for Motu Trails is currently being sourced from Toi EDA and Tourism Eastland. In future years, the RTO alignment of Ōpōtiki district will influence where this funding is sourced. The CMBTMN have indicated that Motu Trails will be a core and equal part of the network regardless of their ability to financially contribute.

The following diagram outlines how these marketing relationships fit together in terms of promoting Ōpōtiki district.

Figure 4 — Marketing relationships for Ōpōtiki



### **Enhance current promotional content**

The marketing agencies and networks included in the section above provide a platform to promote Ōpōtiki. They need to be provided with up to date and relevant content to include in their promotions. There is also the requirement of Ōpōtiki district specific promotions not covered by these agencies (for example the Ōpōtiki visitor website and the Ōpōtiki visitor brochure). This activity is currently being undertaken by the Ōpōtiki i-SITE staff. There is scope to further expand this role in providing information to these marketing agencies/networks and visitors themselves by:

- Developing sample itineraries (some in partnership with Motu Trails Trust)
- Providing updated content to newzealand.com in the form of stories and listings (in liaison with Motu Trails Trust)
- Updating image and video footage library for use by Council and third parties (eg media, trade, u-tube etc), focusing on images that show visitors undertaking activities in the amazing landscape (in liaison with Motu Trails Trust)
- Additional use of video footage in the i-SITE and on the Ōpōtiki website (especially the Coast road SH35, and Motu trails)
- Supplying press releases to local and national media
- Promoting additional cycling opportunities (eg on quiet back roads)
- Inviting and hosting media relevant to target markets (some via marketing agencies/networks and some targeted directly)
- Directly target groups with a focus on touring – for the Pacific Coast highway SH35 (eg motorcycle and vintage car groups, and confident road cycling groups)

### **Producing positive news stories**

Developing positive news stories for distribution to local and national media will go a long way towards:

- i) getting the local community on board in terms of understanding the benefits of tourism to the district in general (outside of the immediate tourism industry), and to instil a feeling of positivity about their district, and
- ii) obtaining free editorial space in national media.

Quirky facts and stories, 'secret' special places, and well-known local personalities are great hooks to get media interested in a story. For example, Ōpōtiki has a number of local personalities who are well known for taking their can do/ self-reliance/ cheeky and fun attitude to the world (eg Taika Waititi, and Willie Apiata).



Table 3 — Actions - Develop a strong and positive profile for Ōpōtiki District

Activity	Action required	Who
Establish Ōpōtiki brand	Revisit current brand and further develop	ODC
Secure funding for marketing of Motu Trails	Ensure MTCT remains sustainable	MTCT, ODC, Whakatōhea MTB, Gisborne DC, DOC
Develop iconic mass participation event that builds the profile of the Motu Trails and Opotiki (could be further developing an existing event such as the Dunes Dash)	Develop concept paper or develop plan to enhance existing event, and seek event development and management company	ODC, community
Representation by marketing bodies/ networks	Seek funding for RTO representation Operators to provide input on RTO alignment Align with and contribute financially to an RTO – which RTO will depend on funding available and level of service proposed by RTO	ODC, Tourism operator networking group
Enhance current promotional content	Ongoing and updated promotional information developed and distributed to marketing partners	i-SITE staff (in partnership with Motu Trails Trust on some initiatives, and operators)
Positive message seeding	Craft positive media stories and distribute to local and national media on a regular basis (on at least a monthly basis)	ODC, iSITE to coordinate – operators, Tourism operator networking group, and wider community to contribute

**Acronyms and abbreviations:**

Toi EDA – Eastern Bay of Plenty Economic Development Agency

ODC – Opotiki District Council

EBay CoC – Eastern Bay of Plenty Chamber of Commerce

MTCT – Motu Trails Charitable Trust

DOC – Department of Conservation

iSITE – Visitor Centre

Whakatōhea MTB - Maori Trust Board

## 8.2 Develop quality experiences and services

WHY?

It is one thing to have a stunning natural landscape and rich culture, but how can visitors experience these?

More experiences need to be developed to i) attract visitors, and ii) keep them in the district longer

### **Develop *experiences* that complement current core attractions**

#### ***Additional cycle trails***

Additional cycle trails are required to build on the initial success of the Motu Trails and to attract visitors to stay longer. Ōpōtiki does not currently have more than one day cycling for either the novice rider/ family markets or the adventure rider (except for cycling on back roads – which is not attractive to all riders). Focusing on developing additional easy grade cycle trails accessible for the novice rider and family market will encourage these visitors to stay in Ōpōtiki longer and split their riding over at least two days. Linking a cycle trail west to Ohope will also open up additional markets for Ōpōtiki – Whakatane and Ohope residents, and visitors to their district.

Developing additional trails for adventure riders is secondary as they do not tend to stay in the area as long and have a lower on average spend – especially on other activities). Opportunities for additional rides for this market sit strongly with Rotorua.

#### ***Short duration activities***

The novice and family cycle market, or general visitors who like to cycle while on holiday, also seek additional short duration activities to do whilst in the area. Whilst the district would benefit from another iconic activity to add to the cycle trails, other complementary activities which may not necessarily be a key draw card for the area but add to the overall visitor experience, encourage a longer length of stay and a higher spend in the district are also important to develop.

Development of these activities needs to be market driven, in that the private sector should develop these based on market demand. Incentives to assist SME start up by a variety of government agencies could include:

- business advisory service
- mentoring
- \$ for \$ grants
- loan guarantee schemes
- rent holidays for businesses working out of Council-owned premises or land

Gaps and opportunities in the visitor experience can be identified and publicised to spur interest. A summary prospectus and media articles could be developed to publicise the opportunities. Existing operators/ businesses may look to expand their current business if they can see the potential. To complement the current experience, these should include short duration (eg less than half a day) activities, (eg 2-3 hour fishing trips, kayaking trips, horse riding), all-weather / indoor activities, evening activities (eg a wine or tapas style bar), activities that enhance the current offering (eg historic precinct tours), and activities that are unique (eg weka viewing).

There are opportunities that have been identified but are not currently high priority in terms of being developed. For example, DOC has identified a river kayaking/ rafting journey on the Waioeka River, including pull out points with interpretation. This would be an amazing family based activity complementary to the cycle trails, and could potentially be another key draw card for the area. Council and the community should support DOC to push this higher on their agenda.

The district has a very strong equine presence. While the establishment of purpose built riding tracks may not be financially feasible, there are opportunities to include the presence of horses and horse riding as an activity to support the brand of Ōpōtiki as being laid back and rural and to provide another way to experience the unique environment. Ōpōtiki has extensive beaches to ride on.



## **Develop services and infrastructure to support Ōpōtiki as a visitor destination**

### ***Dining options***

Ōpōtiki has a very limited range of evening dining options, and a lack of destination cafes (eg cafes that people travel to as an activity in itself or as part of their experience, set in a scenic spot).

As with the development of activities and attractions, development of cafes and restaurants needs to be market driven. Council can instigate this (see development of activities above). Demand for these services is currently increasing slowly. It will be a long-term process, but once Ōpōtiki gets a reputation for a variety of eating (and accommodation) options, and with further promotion of the Motu Trails, demand will increase more.

If there is no local interest in establishing quality dining then one option may be to seek the interest of an established business in a surrounding area (eg Rotorua, Ohope or Tauranga) with the intention of establishing a sister property arrangement in Ōpōtiki.

In the interim, solutions could include:

- encouraging more accommodation providers to provide packed lunches and in-house meals,
- providing BBQs at key visitor locations (BBQs at a couple of coastal reserve locations have already been identified as possible future development plans in the Reserve Management Plans)
- promoting BBQs and picnics at the beach (eg i-SITE, website, brochures)
- supermarkets to potentially provide and deliver lunch boxes and picnic hamper boxes to accommodation, or packaged for purchase in store, and
- encouraging more mobile food trucks – especially on key stop off points on the Dunes trails during busy periods.

### ***Accommodation options***

There is a limited range of accommodation in Ōpōtiki. Feedback on existing holiday parks, holiday houses and some motel accommodation is very good. There is however potential to develop mid to upper end accommodation with a destination focus (eg with a coastal or bush location, rather than on the road). As with the development of activities and attractions, and dining, the development of accommodation needs to be market driven. Council can instigate this (see development of activities above).

Table 4 — Actions - Develop quality experiences and services

Activity	Action required	Who
Additional family friendly cycle trails	Advocacy for suitable potential routes Plan, secure funding and construction	ODC, MTCT, Toi EDA ODC, DOC, MTCT
Facilitate the development of short duration activities	Advocate for development of the DOC kayak/rafting journey Support development of Ohiwa harbour as a visitor destination Publicise gaps in the market Develop a summary prospectus identifying the opportunities Investigate options to support SME start up	ODC, DOC, Tourism operators networking group BOPRC, DOC, ODC, WDC, Iwi ODC (using Toi EDA/ EBay CoC networks) ODC ODC and EBay CoC?

Activity	Action required	Who
Facilitate the development of quality dining options	<p>Publicise gaps in the market</p> <p>Develop a summary prospectus identifying the opportunities</p> <p>Identify and approach suitable potential sister businesses</p> <p>Investigate options to support SME start up</p> <p>Facilitate interim solutions - advocate and encourage: more accommodation providers' packed lunches/in-house meals; BBQs/picnics at the beach; supermarket lunch boxes/ picnic hamper boxes; more mobile food trucks</p>	<p>ODC (using Toi EDA/ EBay CoC networks)?</p> <p>ODC</p> <p>ODC, EBay CoC?</p> <p>ODC and EBay CoC?</p> <p>ODC, i-SITE, Tourism operators networking group</p>
Facilitate the development of a wider range of accommodation	<p>Publicise gaps in the market</p> <p>Develop a summary prospectus identifying the opportunities</p> <p>Investigate options to support SME start up</p>	<p>ODC (using Toi EDA/ EBay CoC networks)?</p> <p>ODC</p> <p>ODC and EBay CoC?</p>

**Acronyms and abbreviations:**

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MTCT – Motu Trails Charitable Trust

DOC – Department of Conservation

iSITE – Visitor Centre

Whakatōhea MTB - Maori Trust Board

BOPRC – Bay of Plenty Regional Council

WDC – Whakatane District Council



## 8.3 Support business development and the tourism environment

### WHY?

Visitor satisfaction with their Ōpōtiki experience is crucial to the growth of the sector. Positive word of mouth is the best form of marketing. This is even more so with the popularity of social media - where word travels very quickly and widely. Visitors are increasingly using their friends and other visitors more than official information sources as they are independent and unbiased. Attracting visitors to come back and visit again is also a better use of marketing funds than to try and attract new visitors. Supporting the development of SMEs so that they provide great visitor service, and getting the wider community to support tourism is an important step in achieving high visitor satisfaction.

### **Assist small businesses to up-skill**

Mentoring for existing businesses can be a very effective method of up skilling existing tourism and service industry SMEs. This can be done on a more informal basis or for example via the Business NZ mentoring programme ([www.businessmentors.org.nz](http://www.businessmentors.org.nz)).

Workshops with guest speakers can also be run (for example via the Motu Trails Trust's existing programme, and RTO road show workshops).

Key areas for up skilling and education include:

- understanding visitor needs and customer service
- information technology
- social media
- changes to the visitor decision making and purchasing process (eg the move to online and mobile devices)
- obtaining visitor feedback and collating and using visitor statistics (visitor databases)
- marketing and promotions (including packaging)
- finance

Providing scholarships to study in tourism and management related fields (potentially via Whakatōhea MTB) and seeking internships with established tourism companies are other ways to up skill.

### **Operator networking opportunities**

Providing opportunities for local tourism and wider service industry businesses to network is an effective way to encourage a cohesive industry, ensure there are communications (and chances for operators to ask questions) on a regular basis (eg every quarter year), share knowledge, and work together (eg packaging products together). These sessions can also be used to update the industry on, for example, promotional opportunities, visitor numbers, and visitor satisfaction. Guest speakers can be included to speak on topics where the industry may need up skilling

(eg using online marketing, social media, adding cultural interpretation). Industry issues and opportunities can also be discussed (such as opening hours during weekends and public holidays), and the group can advocate and lobby collectively on key issues.

Council/ iSITE staff could facilitate a programme of regular meetings, potentially to be held at different tourism business locations so that businesses get a feel for what other businesses have to offer.

### **Cultural enhancement to Ōpōtiki's visitor experience**

Ōpōtiki has a very rich history. Visitors are very interested in a place's cultural and historical heritage, especially if it is integrated into general visitor activities. The Central Business District includes an interesting collection of pre 1940 commercial and retail buildings that has been packaged as 'Historic Heart' in an Historic Places Trust brochure. Historical and cultural elements are included in the delivery of the Motu Trails experience (eg pou, and interpretation panels at stop points), and DOC has included cultural and historical interpretation at key stop off points along the Waioeka road journey. Further opportunities could be identified for Ōpōtiki to tell its story to complement three interpretation panels in the CBD and Historic Heart promotion, and initiatives through the Ōpōtiki Museum. Cultural tourism attributes could also potentially be advanced under the Bay of Plenty Maori Economic Development Strategy (He Mauri Ohooho).



### **Increase local awareness and support of the tourism industry**

The community as a whole has a role to play in the delivery of visitor experiences. Many people and businesses do not however see themselves as part of the industry. Every opportunity should be taken to profile the importance of the visitor industry to Ōpōtiki in general. For example, regular good news press releases to local and regional media (eg positive visitor feedback, the value of tourism).

### **Establish Ōpōtiki town as a visitor hub**

Ōpōtiki town has the potential to become more of a visitor hub. It does not currently have a presence as a visitor service centre and a lot of visitor traffic passes by. How can it be more inviting to visitors?

- Maximising use of the proposed new library as a welcoming place for visitors, introducing the district's history and culture, and potentially providing services attractive to visitors such as free Wi-Fi
- Divert traffic from highway into town through better signage
- Enhance the entrances to Ōpōtiki district and town – eg using improved signage, additional plantings, pou, other sculptures
- Include cycle friendly infrastructure (such as bike racks)

- Establish weekend markets (eg local fruit and vegetables, arts and crafts – especially youth art, local music etc). Markets are increasingly being bought back into communities around New Zealand to great effect. They are popular with both locals and visitors, and add a great vibrancy to the town.

### **Increase cyclist safety on SH35**

The stretch of coast around the East Cape (SH35) is considered some of the most scenic in New Zealand, and renowned worldwide.

Logging trucks operating on the coast (SH35) can be quite disconcerting, especially for novice cyclists. Truck drivers on this route are reportedly generally very courteous to cyclists sharing the same road. To ensure that this is consistent amongst all drivers and that it continues, regular get-togethers (eg in the form of BBQs) could be held between the RTO (Tourism Eastland) and the truck companies to share important tourism issues and opportunities with the drivers and company owners.

### **Measure visitor satisfaction**

With positive word of mouth being such an important factor in the success of Ōpōtiki as a visitor destination, the industry need to have regular feedback as to how they are doing and where they can improve. A visitor satisfaction survey could be developed and distributed with assistance from the service industry. A URL address could be provided to visitors for filling out a questionnaire online at their convenience (this would result in a lower uptake but would not require data entry), or a traditional paper survey could be distributed (this would result in a higher uptake but requires data entry). The survey could run continuously or on a regular basis. This will be important to see how the district is tracking over time and provides a good measurement for a core objective of this visitor strategy.

Visitor feedback from secondary sources is also useful very useful (eg trip advisor, facebook, bookabach), but is more difficult to accurately collate and measure.

The New Zealand Cycle Trail evaluation research undertaken on behalf of MBIE has as provided some good initial visitor and operator feedback on the Motu Trails. Ideally, this research should be repeated, using the initial research as a baseline and measuring trends over time as the trail develops. This research will measure visitor satisfaction, economic contribution of the trail to the Ōpōtiki economy, and gaps and opportunities.

Table 5 — Actions - Support business development and the tourism environment

Activity	Action required	Who
Up skilling SMEs	Instigate a mentoring programme using an existing supplier or a more informal approach Scholarship programme Identify opportunities for internships Run a series of workshops	ODC, Toi EDA, PTE's, Ebay CoC?  PTE's  ODC, Tourism operators networking group  ODC, MTCT, CMBTMN, RTO
Operator networking	Establish an operator networking group that meets regularly. This group can also discuss the key opportunities for Ōpōtiki district, and advocate and lobby for opportunities to grow the visitor industry on key issues	Tourism operators supported by the iSITE and ODC
Cultural enhancement to Ōpōtiki's visitor experience	Identify areas where cultural interpretation could be added  Identify cultural tourism attributes that could be advanced under the Bay of Plenty Maori Economic Development Strategy (He Mauri Ohoho)  Educate the visitor industry by adding cultural and historical interpretation to visitor experiences in an appropriate way	Iwi, ODC, BOPRC, DOC,  Toi-EDA  Tourism operators networking group, ODC
Increase local awareness and support of the tourism industry	Regular good news press releases to local and regional media	ODC, Tourism operators networking group

Activity	Action required	Who
Establish Ōpōtiki town as a visitor hub	<p>Maximise use of the proposed new library as a welcoming place for visitors, introducing the district's history and culture, and potentially providing services attractive to visitors such as free Wi-Fi</p> <p>Divert traffic from highway into town through better signage</p> <p>Enhance the entrances to Ōpōtiki district and town – eg using improved signage, additional plantings, pou, other sculptures</p> <p>Include cycle friendly infrastructure (such as bike racks)</p> <p>Establish weekend markets (eg local fruit and vegetables, arts and crafts – especially youth art, local music etc)</p>	<p>ODC</p> <p>ODC</p> <p>ODC</p> <p>ODC and private sector</p> <p>Community group (with ODC support)</p>
Increase cyclist safety on SH35	Regular get-togethers between RTO and logging truck owners/drivers to discuss safety issues	Tourism Eastland Regional Tourism Organisation; ODC

Activity	Action required	Who
Measure visitor satisfaction	Set up a visitor satisfaction monitor	ODC, iSITE, Tourism operators networking group
	Collate secondary sources of visitor feedback (eg from social media sites)	iSITE
	Report findings to industry and community on a regular basis	iSITE, ODC
	Advocate (to MBIE/ NZCT) for a repeat of the Motu Trails Cycleway research	MTCT, ODC

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MTCT – Motu Trails Charitable Trust

DOC – Department of Conservation

iSITE – Visitor Centre

Whakatōhea MTB - Maori Trust Board

NZCT – New Zealand Cycle Trail

PTEs – Private Training Enterprise

## 9 Appendix

### Appendix 1: Consultation list

List of people consulted, contacted by phone and email, or came to the open house

Name	Business
Tina Cornwell	Ōpōtiki i-SITE
John Galbraith	Toi-EDA
Aaron Milne	Whakatane District Council
Bruce Erasmus	Whakatane District Council
Danny Paruru	Whakatohea Maori Trust board
Lyn Riesterer	Ōpōtiki DC Councillor
Arihia Tuoro	Ōpōtiki DC Councillor
Jim Robinson	CEO Motu Trails Charitable Trust
Dave Emslie	Chairman Motu Trails Charitable Trust
Jo Pentreath	Outgoing CEO Motu Trails Charitable Trust
Steve Brightwell	DOC
Ngaio Knebel - Ngaio is part owner of Motu trails ltd	
John and Virginia Maynard	Bushhaven
Geoff Gabites	Adventure South

Name	Business
Tim de Jong	Adventure South
Kerry Taggart	Tourism Eastland
Rhys Arrowsmith	Tourism Bay of Plenty
Tania Bui	Central Mountain Biking Tourism Marketing Network
Oscar Nathan	Destination Rotorua Marketing
Dot Wilson	Ōpōtiki Museum
Jenny Gregory	
Verna McDonnell	
Volker Grindel	Central Oasis Backpackers
Chris Donkin	
Rhiannon Donkin	
Gordon Nelson	
Jimmy Heal	New World
Grant Koia	Travel Shop
Meg & Mike Collins	Fantail Cottage B&B
James Kim	Arigato Mum's Sushi
Lloyd Hosken	Wharf Hub
John and Kay McLeod	Hukutaia Domain care group



Name	Business
Nola Morgan	Ōhiwa Holiday Park
Shona Hammond Boys	Children's Art House
Cathy Gamman	Crossroads Pizzas
Bob Gardiner and Dianne Black	Black Forest Sawmills
Anne Hill	
Andrea Beal	Ōpōtiki Pharmacy
Robert McLellan	Tirohanga Motor Camp
Chris Stone	Oariki Coastal Cottage
Kathleen Young	Capeview Cottage
Doug Wheeler	
Brian Wilson	Trout fish guiding
Barry Kirkland	DeBrets Taupo

Appendix 2: Ōpōtiki's Brand values

