

West Coast in line for development dollars

The new Labour Government has singled out the West Coast as an early recipient of funds from the newly created \$1b regional economic development fund.

The content and character of the fund will not be known in detail until the new

year, but Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones says the first four regions to benefit will be the West Coast, along with Northland, Whanganui-Manawatu and part of the East Cape.

In announcing the fund, Mr Jones said it

would allow Government to "step up to the plate and provide public-good funding".

DWC chief executive Chris Mackenzie says the opportunities the fund will bring will be welcomed by the region.

"The Government has recognised what

is on offer here on the Coast, and clearly wants to play its part in galvanising our economy. We are excited to see what that will mean for the region and we aim to play a key role in directing and supporting the Government in this process."



Co.Starters programme expanding

Early success with the Co.Starters programme run in Buller has inspired DWC to secure the licence for the programme and roll out other Co.Starter courses in Westland and Grey.

Co.Starters is a nine week programme aimed at providing budding entrepreneurs with new skills to help them turn their ideas into action and thriving endeavours. Originally starting in America, Co.Starters was brought to New Zealand in 2015 and is now in seven areas around the country.

Last year 36 participants graduated from the Buller programme with phenomenal results – 11 new businesses were established, 16 new full time equivalent positions created, and the participating businesses collectively attracted over \$150,000 in start-up funding.

A Co.Starters course recently finished in Westport which involved 15 enthusiastic participants. They were supported by facilitators Eamon Ginley and Natasha Barnes-Dellaca, along with weekly talks from local speakers who shared their own experiences in business with the group.

The Westport participants finished on a high, pitching their businesses to a gathering of 60 people. Their first alumni meet-up will be held on 6 December at EPIC Westport with all past Co.Starter participants welcome. To attend please email emma@epicwestport.co.nz.

The Hokitika cohort, run by WestREAP, will be holding its celebration night on the 30th November.

The next round of Co.Starters is looking to get underway early in 2018. If you would like to register your interest, please email events@dwc.org.nz.

Feasibility projects receive funds

Four projects included in the 2017 West Coast Economic Development Action Plan have secured feasibility funding \$350,000 - \$175,000 each from DWC and central government.

The projects are:

- Business case for Oparara Arches development;
- Feasibility study for upgrade of Croesus Road, Blackball (access to Paparoa Track Great Walk / Pike 29 Memorial Trail);
- Business case for Kawatiri Coastal Trail; and
- Feasibility study for social enterprise pilot programme at Karamea;

A range of agencies, including DWC, Department of Conservation, NZTA, local Iwi, councils and community organisations work and collaborate on these projects, which all offer the potential for exciting new opportunities for the wider region. More information on these projects can be found on DWC's website, www.dwc.org.nz.

Economic fund produces another Westland winner

One of New Zealand's largest eggplant operations is going from strength to strength in Harihari and is proving the value of working with DWC.

Westland Produce was one of many businesses receiving financial support through the District Economic Stimulus Fund, set up in August 2015 in response to the economic challenges facing the West Coast region. Businesses applied for funding via the three West Coast district councils, which each have up to \$1m to distribute. The fund closed this year after assisting 15 projects in Buller, 2 in Grey and 6 in Westland.

Westland Produce is one of those which has worked hard to capitalise

on the initial support and is seeing significant success. The small company now employs seven full time staff, and works with a Christchurch company to distribute its harvest.

DWC chief executive Chris Mackenzie says he has been watching the positive publicity about Westland Produce recently and is glad to see the benefits of the funding in action. "Being able to help and support a business while it finds its own feet was the point of this fund and I am always pleased to see business owners use a boost but then take the ball and really run with it to make their own success."

CALLING ALL FOODIES!

Are you a food producer, distributor, café or restaurant owner that has an interest in being able to use and promote local food?

One of the projects from the West Coast Economic Development Action plan involves exploring the social enterprise approach to business across the region. This project is being led by the Akina Foundation and their initial focus is on developing a food cluster, or collective, in Karamea to produce, add value, market and distribute locally grown food while supporting local employment,



tourism and environmental initiatives.

Background research is underway with the aim of identifying all interested parties, both at the supply level and the 'market users' end.

Get in touch with us either via emailing info@dwc.org.nz or phone 0800 768 0140 to register your details by Friday 15 December.

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Investment in West Coast Wilderness Trail paying off

Travellers from Auckland are proving to be the most prolific visitors to the West Coast Wilderness Trail - one of the leading rides in the Nga Haerenga New Zealand Cycle Trails Great Rides network.

The trail is one of the many successful ventures supported by DWC, which has provided over \$3 million towards its construction.

Statistics collected by the West Coast Wilderness Trail Trust show rider numbers are already approaching 10,000 with 94% of these people visiting the West Coast solely because of the trail. Data shows that the majority of the riders are new visitors, aged over 50 who stay in the region on average 3 to 4 nights spending around \$200 each per day.

The trail has been a major catalyst for the revival of Kumara township, with the restoration of the 1876 award winning Theatre Royal Hotel, and historic cottages and buildings that have been converted into a range of both quality and backpacker accommodation.

Four additional business ventures, including shuttle services, scenic waterway



Riders at Mahinapua Creek Boardwalk. PHOTO: Jason Blair

attractions, accommodation at Ross and a depot providing booking services and 70 hire bikes, have been developed with investment of over \$7 million.

This growth has led to the creation of over 30 direct full and part-time jobs in management, hospitality and services.

The Wilderness Trail is currently being featured by Tourism New Zealand as one of just three cycle trails in their international marketing campaigns this year. The promising growth of the trail's success and popularity is a positive indicator, with growth in rider numbers, business opportunities and employment expected to continue, along with the ongoing benefits that this brings to the West Coast economy.

Upcoming Events

Visit dwc.org.nz for more information on these events, and to register.

DWC's Pitch Business Networking Event

Wednesday 6 December	6pm-9pm	Hokitika
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DWC Business Breakfast – details to follow on our website

Monday 11 December	7:30am-9am	Greymouth
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