

## New Key Staff for DWC

Development West Coast (DWC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Stuart Brown as its new chief financial officer (CFO) and Jo Birnie as economic development manager.

"Jo and Stuart will be key members of our executive team as we navigate the current economic crisis and help lead the region through the COVID-19 recovery," says DWC chief executive Heath Milne.

Stuart Brown has been appointed CFO, replacing Brent Ford who has been interim CFO since Mark Dawson left in January.

Mr Brown brings over two decades of finance experience to DWC.

Born and educated in the South Island, he worked in Matamata for 12 years in finance. He then travelled to the UK and worked in Canada and USA for eight years. Most recently, he was based in Australia where he led the finance teams for large international ASX listed mining companies.

Mr Brown is pleased to be returning home after a lengthy period away and brings a commercial focus to the role of CFO for DWC. He will be ensuring that compliance is maintained while allowing for an agile approach to business support.

"I'm looking forward to working with the wide range of businesses on the Coast and supporting the finance strategies that will help them thrive," he says.

Jo Birnie also joins DWC, where she takes on the new role of economic development manager.

Born and educated in the UK, Ms Birnie started her career as a consultant. She moved to New Zealand in 2002, where she worked as a specialised HR practitioner with her time split between the South Island and Wellington, working in both the public and private sector, including HR Manager for Safe Air (Air NZ).

In 2009 she started her own business and HR consultancy where she has undertaken project/programme and change management positions across many agencies in the public sector and has worked with a wide range of SMEs, including many businesses on the West Coast as part of the Regional Business Partner Network.

Ms Birnie brings with her a wealth of knowledge of programme and change management, of implementing change and taking people on the journey. Her experience of navigating the machinery of government whilst recognising the regional level and the interdependencies of decisions will be invaluable for DWC going forward.

"The West Coast faces significant challenges ahead due to the impact of COVID-19," says Mr Milne.

"I am confident that Stuart and Jo have the experience and expertise we need to ensure DWC continues its positive momentum.

"The skillsets they bring will enable us to better support our business community during this challenging time, as well as to leverage any opportunities the landscape ahead may present."

## COVID-19 Business Support

If your business is being impacted by COVID-19, contact DWC to discuss your individual circumstances. We're here to help you get through.

info@dwc.org.nz | 0800 768 0140

### Small Business Cashflow Loan Scheme

Inland Revenue will provide interest-free loans for a year to small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 economic shock.

The Small Business Cashflow Loan Scheme will provide assistance of up to \$100,000 to firms employing 50 or fewer full-time equivalent employees.

Loans will be interest-free if they are paid back within a year. The interest rate will be 3% for a maximum term of five years. Repayments are not required for the first two years.

The maximum amount you can borrow depends on the number of full-time and part-time employees you have.

If you are a business without employees, ie sole trader or self-employed, you can receive a loan of up to \$11,800.

Applications now close on 24 July 2020.

If your business does not meet the above criteria, but has a viable future, please contact DWC as we may be able to provide assistance.

More information:  
[www.ird.govt.nz](http://www.ird.govt.nz)

### Wage Subsidy Extension

A Wage Subsidy Extension payment will be available to support employers, including sole traders, who are still significantly impacted by COVID-19 after the Wage Subsidy ends.

The Wage Subsidy Extension will be available from 10 June 2020 until 1 September 2020 so employers can keep paying their employees.

You must have had, or expect to have, a revenue loss of at least 40% for the 30 days before you apply, compared to the closest period last year.

It will cover 8 weeks per employee from the date you submit your application.

It will be paid to you as a lump sum at the same weekly rate as the Wage Subsidy.

More information:  
[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)

## COVID-19s impact on West Coast businesses

62 percent of respondents to a recent survey of West Coast businesses are reporting major financial impacts from COVID-19 with sales/revenue down 25 percent or more. 26 percent of businesses surveyed also reported reducing their staffing levels.

This data was gathered as part of a survey of local businesses conducted by DWC during Alert Level 2.

The survey received around 200 responses between 18 April - 1 June.

64 percent of those surveyed believed their businesses will survive the current COVID-19 crisis, 26 percent were unsure, 5 percent have put their businesses in hibernation and around 4 percent are either considering closing or have already closed.

The biggest challenges currently facing West Coast businesses were cited as reductions in sales/revenue, customer numbers and staffing hours.

Over the next three months, 58 percent of businesses expect their sales/revenue will be down 25 percent or more. Employment levels are expected to decrease further with 30 percent of businesses stating they will have to reduce staff over the next three months.

Amongst those surveyed, businesses in the Westland District have been the most heavily impacted by the pandemic. 75 percent of businesses in Westland have reported major negative financial impacts, in comparison to 51 percent of respondents in Grey and 50 percent in Buller.

32 percent of respondents from Buller have reported reducing staffing levels, 30 percent in Westland and 17 percent in Grey.

DWC chief executive Heath Milne said the survey was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the impact of the pandemic across the Coast and how this has changed over time across the different industries.

"These insights will enable us to target our support more appropriately to meet the needs of our business community. It will also allow us to provide an evidence-based overview of the situation to Government to advocate for further support for the Coast."

An earlier survey, sent out just as New Zealand entered Alert Level 4 lockdown, showed 50 percent of respondents reporting significant financial impacts from COVID-19 in comparison to 62 percent now.

Mr Milne said the results of the surveys demonstrate the changing impact on businesses during the pandemic.

"All sectors in our economy have been affected. However, businesses in tourism and travel have understandably been the hardest hit."

96 percent of tourism and travel businesses reported a major negative impact on their sales/revenue compared to 48 percent for the rest of respondents. 45 percent of tourism and travel businesses have reported reducing staffing levels in comparison to 18 percent of other businesses.

Of businesses in tourism and travel who are heavily reliant on international visitors, 47 percent feel they can adapt to meet the domestic market, while 42 percent are unsure if they can.

The survey highlighted how businesses have responded to the current crisis by utilising different forms of support and advice.

86 percent of businesses had used the Government's wage subsidy and leave schemes. 37 percent utilised free business webinars, 23 percent accessed the Government's small business cashflow loan scheme and 23 percent have received advice and support from DWC.

Businesses were asked which further areas of support and/or advice would best help them manage the impact of the pandemic. 64 percent cited the wage subsidy extension programme, 44 percent marketing support and 19 percent financial advice / cashflow management.

Mr Milne said: "At DWC, our team has directly engaged with over 360 businesses over the last two months, and the survey results reinforce much of what we are seeing on the ground."

"As usual Coast businesses are demonstrating a lot of resilience, but there is a very real need for continued targeted financial assistance and support services to help them adapt to, and cope with, the challenges that are being presented."

## DWC during COVID-19

Snapshot of DWC's activities since NZ entered lockdown (25 March)

**360+**  
Businesses directly engaged with

**Economic Recovery** & **Tourism Recovery** Groups formed.

**4** Business webinars **2** Business surveys

**NowOpen.co.nz** website showcasing **260+ businesses\***

**Delivery rebates** to around **30 businesses**

**\$1.75M** Commercial finance loans fast tracked to **12 businesses**

**\$140,000** COVID-19 Business advisory voucher funding for professional services allocated to around **70 businesses**

**Keep it Coastal, Support Local & Big Coast - Big Deals** West Coast marketing campaigns launched

Regular communications on **Government support packages**

**REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT SCHEME** Working with MSD on a PGF funded employment project

**REDEPLOYMENT SCHEME** Working with MSD on a regional employment hub

\* Collaboration between DWC, EPIC Westport and Tai Poutini Polytechnic, including assistance getting businesses online.