



The Glacier Country community gathers to host John Campbell from TVNZ Breakfast

## Challenges and opportunities in a diverse region

The West Coast stretches over 600km from Karamea to Haast - similar in distance as Auckland to Wellington.

Being spread over such a vast area, our region has extremely diverse landscapes - from the Nikau palm covered beaches up north to the glaciers down south. This diversity is also reflected in our economy and how each of our districts have been impacted by the pandemic.

Infometrics' GDP figures for the December quarter show we are currently a region of extremes, with the Buller District leading New Zealand in economic growth, while Westland is the hardest hit district in the country (equal with Mackenzie District).

For the December 2020 quarter, West Coast GDP fell by 1.7%, compared to a 0.2% increase nationally. Buller's GDP grew by 7.5%, Grey's fell by 1.2% and Westland experienced a drop of 11.4%.

Buller's growth has largely been on the back of strong primary industries - dairy farming and mining. It has also bucked the trend with an increase in tourism spending. For the year to December 2020, Buller had a 4.6% rise in visitor expenditure.

At the other end of our region, the experience has been vastly different. Visitor spending in Westland has fallen by 28.4%, due to the impact border closures are having on the previously thriving Glacier Country region.

Given the devastating impact COVID-19 is having, DWC trustees have committed \$5m towards a package to help



**Heath Milne**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, DEVELOPMENT WEST COAST

protect the social and economic fabric of Glacier Country.

It is an incredibly difficult time for those affected, so we are grateful for the support the national media has given by shining a spotlight on the situation and giving voice to those in the communities.

On Thursday, there was a welcome announcement by Minister Kiri Allan of a \$45m Predator Free project in South Westland. This project is expected to create over 50 jobs in the area over five years.

Last week it was also announced that the Provincial Development Unit has granted Buller District Council \$2 million to get the Kawatiri whitebait project up and running with commercial partner New Zealand Whitebait. The \$7m project aims to produce up to 100 tonnes of whitebait a year and is expected to employ more than 30 people.

The Greymouth Port is also enjoying significant investment, with \$7m allocated for dredging, new wharves, and an expanded slipway and the \$17.9m Pounamu Pathway project is under development.

Despite the current challenges, things are happening. There are exciting developments taking place across our diverse region, which will create opportunities and help build further resilience into our economy.

## DWC commits \$5m towards Glacier Country

DWC has committed \$5 million towards a package to help protect the social and economic fabric of Glacier Country.

A recent survey conducted by DWC and Glacier Country Tourism Group has revealed the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on businesses in the Glacier Country area.

According to survey results: 62% of jobs have been lost in the Glacier Country, 16% of businesses have closed, at least 23% of people have left, and the area has experienced significant losses of volunteers in key community services.

It is forecast that in the next six months, if there is no additional support, 84% of jobs will be lost, 67% of businesses will be closed, and at least 31% of people will leave the community.

DWC chief executive Heath Milne said Glacier Country has been a key contributor to the economy of the wider West Coast region and New Zealand. Pre-COVID, it was responsible for 21% of inbound tourists to NZ and contributed around \$120m per annum to New Zealand's GDP.

"When we come out of this situation, and international tourists return, if that community isn't there to host them it is going to have an impact on the whole country."

"The true value of Glacier Country goes far beyond its significant economic contribution. Over 1,170 West Coasters have built lives and families in the area, with many contributing to the wellbeing of their small communities through volunteer services.

"The conversation is not just about tourism - it is about the community. It is about the teachers, builders, electricians, and the volunteers providing fire and emergency, ambulance and search and rescue services. This is about the social fabric of the area. The community down there will not survive unless there is some form of support."

In response to the current crisis, DWC has committed \$5m towards an assistance package.

"The focus of the assistance will be decided after consulting with the community facilitated through the Glacier Country Tourism Group. The Group has been liaising with the wider community over the past week to get input as to the best way to utilise the funding to the benefit of the whole Glacier Country area.

"Given the gravity of the situation in Glacier Country, we believe there is still a good opportunity for Government to work with local communities to help protect their social and economic fabric, and ensure they are ready and able to significantly contribute to the national economy once again when it rebounds."

## West Coast leadership programme

Calling for expressions of interest for the next West Coast leadership programme.

Facilitated by DWC and delivered by the New Zealand Institute of Management and Leadership, this programme includes 6 workshops run through June to November. These workshops on the core facets of leadership and management will be held across the region.

DWC events coordinator Rachel Doolan says the programme offers a unique learning opportunity for new team leaders and those progressing in their careers to build their leadership capabilities, advance their knowledge and deliver results.

For expressions of interest or to secure your place on the programme please contact Rachel on 03 769 7000 or [events@dwc.org.nz](mailto:events@dwc.org.nz)



## Governance presentation and event

Join the Institute of Directors (IoD) for a presentation and interactive governance session.

IoD is delighted to be making presentations to the winners of its 'Emerging Director' and 'First Step in Governance' awards at a lunch event in Greymouth on 25 March.

The Emerging Director Award supports the careers of directors and executives committed to career development and the development of governance as a profession. The First Steps in Governance Award provides opportunities for young professionals to gain governance experience in the not-for-profit sector. Both awards include an internship, mentoring, complimentary IoD membership and course attendance.

Congratulations to Eric de Boer, Infrastructure Delivery Manager at Buller District Council, who was awarded the West Coast First Steps in Governance Award late last year which includes a governance internship with DWC. The winner of the West Coast Emerging Director Award will be announced shortly and will receive an internship on the board of Westroads Ltd.

At this lunch event, IoD Chartered Fellow Rex Williams will lead an interactive discussion on governance.

**12.15pm - 1.45pm | Monteith's Brewing Co, Greymouth | FREE**



IoD's First Steps in Governance Award recipient Eric de Boer has taken up a governance internship with DWC

**More info:**  
[www.dwc.org.nz](http://www.dwc.org.nz)

## Digital hubs for Greymouth and Westland

The establishment of new digital hubs in Greymouth and South Westland will improve opportunities for using the internet to boost productivity, creativity and well-being.

Each digital hub is backed by \$400,000 in Government funding over the next five years, administered through the Provincial Development Unit.

DWC is investing a further \$125,000 to each hub over the same period.

DWC project manager Helen Wilson said the two hubs operate in different ways.

The Westland hub, known as Te Wheke, is based at the Fox Glacier Community Centre but is also able to travel to other communities in South Westland to offer training and digital services. It is managed Destination Westland Ltd.

"Byte Māwhera Digital Hub will be permanently located in premises in Greymouth's Guinness Street and offer wireless ultra-fast broadband, co-working spaces, hot-desking, private office space and a small meeting room for hire as part of its services," Ms. Wilson said.

"The main space is designed for training and capability building sessions and the whole hub will be managed by Techspace."

"These two new hubs are the latest in a growing network of digital hubs in rural areas in New Zealand, supported by the Government's Provincial Development Unit." Ms. Wilson said.

**Byte Māwhera Digital Hub will open on 22 March from 3pm**



Te Wheke Outreach Digital Hub