

Community Forum

Private Bag 4999
Christchurch 8140

Meeting notes for the meeting of the Community Forum

5 March 2015, 6pm

Cambridge Room, Canterbury Club, Christchurch

Present:	Community Forum members: Weng Kei Chen, Tom McBrearty, Deborah McCormick, Jocelyn Papprell, John Peet, Emma Twaddell, John Wong, Darren Wright
Apologies:	Community Forum members: Richard Ballantyne, Gill Cox, Martin Evans, Maria Godinet-Watts, Patricia Siataga, Rachel Vogan
Chair:	Darren Wright
In Attendance:	Hon Nicky Wagner, Associate Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Tim Hunter, Chief Executive, Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism Benesia Smith, Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Governance s9(2)(a) [redacted], Advisor, Ministerial and Executive Services, CERA

Agenda

Challenges facing tourism in Christchurch

Tim Hunter – Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism

Discussion:

- Tim Hunter began his presentation by establishing that tourism in Canterbury, especially Christchurch, was badly affected by the earthquakes and has recovered only gradually.
- The presenter spoke about Christchurch in relation to the Canterbury region. Christchurch is the gateway / hub for international and regional visitors into the region (and the South Island). The Canterbury region has most of the visitor attractions. Prior to the earthquakes Christchurch had the majority of beds in Canterbury. The loss of many of these beds put substantial pressure on other towns in the region.
- The Forum heard the tourism sector's goals relating to infrastructure in 2011 after the earthquakes. By 2015 only two of the five goals have been realised. Diversity of accommodation (that is, Christchurch's large motel industry) has helped absorb some of the accommodation losses but more hotels are needed. Ninety per cent of city's tourism activities are back up and running. Thirty-seven new bars and restaurants have opened in Christchurch in the past three months. The Forum noted that ensuring new bars and restaurants do not fail is also important. The presenter agreed and said the scattering of bars and restaurants around the central city did not help matters because often visitors did not know in which direction to walk in order to find a somewhere to eat and drink.

- The Forum asked if the “buzz” about Christchurch contributes to tourism. The presenter replied that features like the Re:Start Mall, Gap Fillers and Pop Up Bars had helped.
- The presenter spoke about visitors’ perceptions of Christchurch. For some visitors the lack of progress on the rebuild is hard to understand. The Forum asked if tourists knew about the earthquakes and were told sometimes they did not especially if they were coming here from long haul markets. One of the big problems is educating travel agents who have forgotten about the earthquakes. The presenter said they are increasing their contact with travel agents around the world.
- The Forum asked if there has been a growth in Bed and Breakfast providers since the earthquakes and were told that there had been some growth in this area but this had not been as significant as expected.
- The presenter explained Christchurch has retained its position as the gateway to the South Island but has become a far weaker proposition as a destination. More Australian holiday travellers arrive in Queenstown than Christchurch in some months and they often skip Christchurch as a destination altogether. This is frustrating for the tourism industry. The Community Forum asked if Auckland Airport’s shareholding in Queenstown Airport exacerbates the problem. The presenter said it has not helped and that Tourism New Zealand has encouraged a preference for Queenstown at Christchurch’s expense.
- A marketing campaign this year will entice Australian skiers to Canterbury, appealing to more experienced skiers who want to try a variety of Canterbury ski fields that are all relatively close to each other.
- The presenter explained that one positive is 15 flights that previously flew into Auckland and Wellington from Australia now fly directly to Christchurch. However, arrivals are still nine or ten per cent below 2010 levels when for the rest of New Zealand they are 20% higher than 2010. Singapore Airlines provided an additional 6400 seats to Christchurch over the summer, which was a good boost for travellers from Asia and Europe.
- The presenter explained that the earthquakes had affected not only Canterbury’s guest nights and spend levels but impacted the whole of the South Island. Guest nights are slowly increasing in Canterbury and Christchurch but it is anticipated they will take many years to return to pre-earthquake levels. Comparatively, guest nights in the rest of the country also grew, which means that closing the gap between Canterbury and New Zealand will continue to pose a problem.
- The Forum heard about the conference market, which very important to tourism in Christchurch. The Forum asked if conference venues all need to be rebuilt in the central city and the presenter confirmed they do. This is because large conferences need to be in a central area where there is a high concentration of accommodation, restaurants and bars.
- The presenter spoke about the need for Cathedral Square to be redeveloped. The Forum noted the Square needs to feel normal and safe. The presenter said that some visitors do not understand why the Cathedral is still in it’s broken and dilapidated state four years on from the earthquakes. He believes it hampers the

Square's image.

- Transparency around the Anchor Projects is important to the tourism sector. To the tourism sector, it seems as if project timelines keep being deferred without any explanation of the reasons for these delays. They have engaged CERA in communication about both the delays and the lack of transparency as where these projects are at. A third of visitors don't think the city centre is fit for visitors.
- The importance of the cruise ship market was highlighted. Currently Akaroa receives smaller cruise ships but cannot receive large ships as Lyttelton did before the earthquakes. The Forum asked if the ferrying ashore arrangement in Akaroa could be replicated in Lyttelton. The presenter replied it could not be reliably done due to the prevailing wind and tide conditions in Lyttelton Harbour.
- In order to host large cruise ships, Lyttelton needs an appropriate wharf. The cost to Lyttelton Port would be between \$20 and \$40 million, although the exact figure has not yet been specified by the Lyttelton Port Company. There would be a funding gap to be met between Lyttelton Port's contribution and the actual cost of the wharf. If there is an agreement for cost sharing, a cruise ship wharf could be built in two to three years.
- The presenter spoke about the importance of presenting Christchurch as an attractive investment location for hoteliers. Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism has developed a prospectus for hotel investment in Christchurch and the Forum requested copies of this. The Forum asked about environmentally friendly requirements for new hotels. The presenter replied that the desperation for beds has turned the industry's focus away from those requirements.
- The Forum asked if investors in the hotel sector are interested in investing in other sectors of the local economy. The presenter explained that there is interest but investors want portfolios to look at and prefer "turnkey" investments rather than being involved in project development. Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism is happy to link investors with necessary parties to make investment a reality.
- The Forum enquired about the industry's forecasts for beds, noting that past predictions have resulted in oversupply. The Forum was assured the numbers are robust and reasonably conservative.

Decisions taken:

None.

An Accessible City

Rob Kerr and Marlene Pope, CERA

Discussion:

- The presenters explained that An Accessible City was starting its next round of projects. The three projects they briefed the Forum on are Hospital Corner (Transport Project 1b), Manchester Street between Armagh and Lichfield Streets (Transport Project 4) and Durham Street / Cambridge Terrace between Armagh and Tuam Streets (Transport Project 3).
- The Forum was shown the proposed design of each project and asked to identify

any potential issues that could be used to inform the design process.

Hospital Corner

- The Hospital Corner will be the busiest bus stop in Christchurch. There will also be lanes for cycling and walking.
- One of the major parts of this project is improving the quality of the space – making it green, vibrant and people-friendly. The Forum enquired about the types of trees to be planted wanting to ensure they would not impede visibility. The presenters assured the Forum they would not.
- The Forum asked how many car parks will be removed. 114 on street car parks will be replaced in a car parking building. The building will provide approximately 900 spaces on the site of the former Christchurch Hospital car parking building and will be built in two stages. The presenters said the removal of on -street car parking is a trade off for a greener space.
- The new Hospital Corner will have a 30kph speed limit and reflect the walking, cycling and bus priority in the central city. The cycleway will be separated from traffic and on the same side as the bus stop.
- The Forum enquired about planned street signage and the presenters assured them that signage will be used strategically and encourage people to travel slowly.

Manchester Street

- This area of Manchester Street will become Manchester Boulevard and will be widened for bus priority lanes. This is part of the strategy to relieve congestion and get more people on public transport and cycles.
- There will be two bus lanes in the centre, with traffic on the outside which would be separated at the bus stop.
- There will be a loss of on-street car parking to three rows of trees for a boulevard effect. The loss of parking will not be an issue for residents or businesses as it will be offset by foot traffic. The Forum pointed out that access for service vehicles is important.
- The traffic lights will give a number of seconds advance movement to buses. The main cycleway will be on the east side and there will be painted median strips. Buses will be offset to make the area more user friendly for pedestrians. The bus shelter will be architecturally designed and will echo the statement the bus exchange makes.
- The Forum enquired about time frames and was told that all going well with consultation, construction will begin in September and last for 12 months.
- The Forum enquired about pre-consultation engagement and was told that CERA is engaging with affected businesses, the Central City Business Association and as many other stakeholders as possible, including seeking advice from the Forum.

Durham Street / Cambridge Terrace

- This area will be 30kph with walking and cycling routes. It includes the northbound lane in Litchfield and Tuam Streets to ensure lower traffic volume in Colombo Street. It will be similar to the section of road outside CPIT at St Asaph Street, protected by islands and well-designed.
- The Forum suggested that the maps have identifying landmarks for ease of understanding and perhaps a larger picture, broken into sections.
- It was noted that some trees are scheduled for removal but are being replaced.
- It was strongly suggested presenters give more thought to the timing of car park removal, work undertaken and creation of new car parks. More car parking will be needed by the end of the year to cope with demand. A park and ride option modelled on the Christchurch Hospital one was suggested, with the Forum noting it is extremely successful. The Forum made it clear now is not the time to remove car parking to encourage use of other transport and suggested that private car park providers became involved in the discussions on these projects.
- The Forum also noted some organisations moving back into the central city were telling their employees to consider other modes of transport as opposed to personal vehicles.
- Parking, cycling and safety were acknowledged as priorities by the presenters. The Forum noted that cycle routes into the city needed to be well-developed so the cycle routes within the central city could be enjoyed.

Decisions taken:

None.

Meeting closed:

8pm

Next meeting:

19 March 2015

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