



Southland Regional Development Strategy

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Media Release

30 November 2016

A memorandum of understanding between Southland stakeholders and Air New Zealand to work on initiatives to increase the region's potential as a destination will be signed in Invercargill today (November 30).

The parties will sign the MOU at Invercargill's newest visitor attraction Classic Motorcycle Mecca, which forms part of today's Southland Regional Development Strategy (SoRDS) Action Plan launch.

Southland Mayoral Forum chairman and Gore District Mayor Tracy Hicks said the parties have agreed to work collaboratively with a focus on creating greater distinctiveness and scale for tourism in Southland.

"We now have the framework to take our working relationship to a higher level."

Events, such as the Bluff Oyster and Seafood Festival, will be showcased through Air New Zealand's promotional channels and Southland footage included in campaigns when a location in the region is a lead destination for the airline, he said.

The MOU means the two parties will share market insights and other information to develop strong initiatives and marketing campaigns to drive traffic into the region, Hicks said.

Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt said the MOU included a commitment to quarterly working meetings between regional and airline representatives to identify marketing initiatives, particularly in the domestic market, to attract more visitors to the region.

These could include themed events involving Bill Richardson Transport World and Classic Motorcycle Mecca, he said.

The initiatives would contribute to the SoRDS goal of encouraging more people to visit, live, work, study and do business in Southland, Shadbolt said.

The SoRDS Action Plan sets a goal of doubling tourism revenue in Southland from \$530m to \$1 billion by 2025. The plan recognises the need for Southland's tourism offerings to be distinctive and sustainable, requiring high investor confidence to build capability.

Outgoing Invercargill Airport chairman Joe O'Connell, who finishes his term today after overseeing the \$13m Invercargill Airport terminal redevelopment, said Southland's value as a destination was growing every day in a world of diminishing natural landscapes and environments.

"The region has the potential to be a major tourist draw. With the growing visitor numbers into New Zealand, there is a need for greater dispersal of people into regions like Southland. This MOU presents a significant economic opportunity for Southland."

Southland has many distinctive and attractive stories that resonate with people who will visit, live, work, study, and do business in the region, O'Connell said.



“Success will be commercialising this opportunity whilst protecting the asset upon which it rests,” he said.

Air New Zealand Regional Affairs Manager Ian Collier said the airline has been working closely with Southland stakeholders to align respective plans and objectives for the region and today’s signing was testament to this.

“It’s very pleasing to see the support and collaboration amongst all stakeholders, we now have a much greater understanding of each other’s businesses and we are all committed to working together for the benefit of the Southland region,” Collier said.

Economic Development Minister Steven Joyce and Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy will be attending the MOU signing.

ENDS

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