



EVENT BRIEFING

Visit to West Coast, 22 to 24 April 2025

Date:	17 April 2025	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	0012753

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon James Meager Minister for the South Island	Meet with representatives from local business and organisations. Meet with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum. Meet with representatives from Westpower Limited. Visit the Snowy River Mine. Visit the Stockton Mine.	22 April 2025

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Karl Woodhead	General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance, Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa)	Privacy of natural persons	
Cory Hagenaars	South Island Lead Advisor, Kānoa	Privacy of natural persons	✓

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes

☐ Withdrawn

Comments



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Purpose

To provide background and supporting information for your visit to the West Coast region from Tuesday, 22 April 2025 to Thursday, 24 April 2025. This briefing provides information on the following events, under your South Island portfolio:

- Meeting with representatives from:
 - local businesses and organisations
 - West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum
 - Westpower Limited.
- Visiting the:
 - Snowy River Mine
 - Stockton Mine.

You will also be visiting the Wanaka and Hokitika airports, Jackson Bay Port and Westport Harbour. The Ministry of Transport are briefing you separately on these visits.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommend you:

- a **Note** the information in this briefing to support your meeting with representatives from local business and organisations.

Noted

- b **Note** the information in this briefing to support your meeting with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum.

Noted

- c **Note** the information in this briefing to support your meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited.

Noted

- d **Note** the information in this briefing to support your visit to the Snowy River Mine.

Noted

- e **Note** the information in this briefing to support your visit to the Stockton Mine.

Noted

- f **Note** the Ministry of Transport are providing a separate briefing for your visits to Wanaka and Hokitika airports, Jackson Bay Port and Westport Harbour.

Noted



Karl Woodhead
General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance
Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit, MBIE

17 / 04 / 2025

Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island

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Summary

1. From Tuesday, 22 April 2025 to Thursday, 24 April 2025 you will be visiting the West Coast region. This visit has been organised by Maureen Pugh, National Party Member of Parliament (MP) for West-Coast-Tasman. Your office has been provided an itinerary, which is outlined below (note this does not include travel times):

Time	Activity	Portfolio
Tuesday, 22 April 2025		
7.00am to 8.00am	Meeting with Glyn Lewers, Mayor of Queenstown District and Joseph Mooney, MP for Southland – to be confirmed	
9.15am to 10.00am	Wanaka Airport	Associate Minister of Transport
12.20pm to 1.30pm	Jackson Bay Port	Associate Minister of Transport
4.00pm to 5.00pm	Meeting with representatives from local businesses and organisations	Minister for the South Island
Wednesday, 23 April 2025		
8.00am to 9.30am	Meeting with representatives from the Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum	Minister for the South Island
9.45am to 10.15am	Visit to Hokitika airport	Associate Minister of Transport
10.20am to 10.50am	Visit to West Coast Fish and Game	Minister for Hunting and Fishing
11.30am to 12.30pm	Meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited	Minister for the South Island
2.15pm to 2.45pm	Visit to Greymouth Port	Associate Minister of Transport
3.45pm to 4.30pm	Visit to Snowy River Mine	Minister for the South Island
Wednesday, 23 April 2025		
8.45am to 9.55am	Visit to Stockton Mine	Minister for the South Island
10.00am to 11.45am	Visit to Westport Harbour	Associate Minister of Transport
1.15pm to 2.00pm	Visit to a youth organisation - to be confirmed	Minister for Youth

2. Information to support your meeting with representatives from local businesses and organisations is attached at **Annex One**.
3. Information to support your meeting with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum is attached at **Annex Two**.
4. Information to support your meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited is attached at **Annex Three**.
5. Information to support your visit to the Snowy River Mine is attached at **Annex Four**.

6. Information to support your visit to the Stockton Mine is attached at **Annex Five**.
7. Information on the West Coast region is attached at **Annex Six**.
8. Information to support your visits to the airports and ports is being provided separately by the Ministry of Transport.
9. Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit officials will not be supporting you at any of these meetings or visits.

Annexes

Annex One: Meeting with representatives from local businesses and organisations

Annex Two: Meeting with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum

Annex Three: Meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited




Annex Four: Visit to the Snowy River Mine

Annex Five: Visit to the Stockton Mine

Annex Six: Information on the West Coast Region

Annex One: Meeting with representatives from local businesses and organisations

1. On Tuesday, 22 April 2025, you are meeting with representatives from Glacier Helicopters, White Heron Tours, West Coast Wildlife Centre (collectively are part of the Glacier Tourism Group), Department of Conservation (DoC), local New Zealand Police and St John Ambulance. Biographies of notable attendees are included at paragraph eight.
2. The meeting will take place from 4.00pm to 5.00pm and will be held at Rainforest Retreat, 46 Cron Street, Franz Josef Glacier, West Coast.
3. The focus of the meeting is to discuss your priorities for the South Island and to gain an understanding of what their challenges are.
4. Glacier Helicopters are based in Franz Josef and operate aviation services, such as scenic flights over Franz Josef Glacier, Fox Glacier and Aoraki/Mt Cook. They also offer private charters and commercial services (such as agricultural, heavy lifting, film and photography).
5. White Heron Tours are based in Whataroa and operate a tourism business guiding visitors to the Kotuku, White Heron nesting site in the Waitangiroto Nature Reserve (DoC land). They are the only approved commercial business operator into the Waitangiroto Nature Reserve, with entry by permit only.
6. West Coast Wildlife Centre are based in Franz Josef and operate a Kiwi welfare centre, initially setting up an incubation and hatching facility for both the Rowi (one of the rarest Kiwi) and the Haast Tokoeka Kiwi. They educate visitors on Kiwi and are involved in repatriating Kiwi back into the wild. They also offer tourist experience packages based around the Wildlife Centre and glaciers.
7. West Coast Wildlife Centre recently announced a \$3 million investment to enhance its facilities (briefing REQ-0011908 refers).
8. Biographies of notable attendees:

	<p>Poppy and Gus Gordon, Owners, Glacier Helicopters</p> <p>Poppy is owner and Chief Executive Officer. She is also a line pilot, qualifying as a commercial pilot in 2008. She has experience working in Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p>Gus is owner, operations manager and lead pilot with nearly 30 years of experience. His expertise is in flying the backcountry experience.</p>
	
	<p>Richard Benton, Owner, West Coast Wildlife Centre</p> <p>Richard is owner and Director. He has owned several businesses in the West Coast and Canterbury regions, primarily in the tourism and conservation sectors.</p>



Dion Arnold, Owner, White Heron Tours

Dion took over the family business more than 20 years ago and has been guiding for 27-plus years.

Risks and mitigations





9. No risks identified.





Communications / Media

10. No media will be present.

Annex Two: Meeting with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum

1. On Wednesday, 23 April 2025, you are meeting with representatives from the West Coast Mayors, Chairs and Iwi Forum. Biographies of attendees are included at paragraph three.
2. The meeting will take place from 8.00am to 9.30am at the Beachfront Hotel, 111 Revell Street, Hokitika and will be in a breakfast setting. The meeting is an opportunity for you to have introductory conversations with key West Coast stakeholders.
3. Biographies of attendees:

	<p>Francois Tumahai, Chair, Te Rūnanga o Ngati Waewae Francois has 14 years board experience as a company director and 18 years governance experience with not-for-profit organisations. He has experience and skills in engineering, business development, environmental performance and compliance monitoring, project management consulting, natural resources and water, policy, planning and regulations, and RMA management.</p>
	<p>Paul Madgwick, Chair, Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio Paul is Chair of Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio, holding this role for over 10 years. He is also a newspaper editor at The Greymouth Star.</p>
	<p>Jamie Cleine, Mayor of Buller District Jamie was elected Mayor in 2019 and 2022. In 2016, he made the move to local government as a Councillor for Westport. He has a background in farming, owning a farm business for 20 years. He has completed trade qualifications in Farm Business Management, gained commercial experience serving as a company director, and collected governance experience in the health and aged care sector.</p>
	<p>Helen Lash, Mayor of Westland District Helen was elected Mayor in 2022. She has a background in farming and built a vineyard from scratch. Helen has also been a secretary, a school-board trustee, a community-development worker, and she was a Westland District Councillor for three years.</p>
<p>No photo available</p>	<p>Barbara Phillips, Chief Executive Officer, Westland District Council Barbara started as CEO in December 2024. She has over 25 years' experience as a Senior Executive in Central Government both in New Zealand and Australia. Most recently Barbara held roles with the Ministry of Health in New Zealand and Queensland Department of Health as the Deputy Director General, Corporate Services and Covid Supply Chain Surety.</p>

	<p>Peter Haddock, Councillor and Chairman, West Coast Regional Council</p> <p>Peter has a background in building, engineering, civil construction works, and river protection works. He has also served 15 years as a Grey District Councillor and Regional Transport Committee Member.</p>
	<p>Darryl Lew, Chief Executive, West Coast Regional Council</p> <p>Prior to his appointment as CEO of West Coast Regional Council, Darryl was a National Director of Operations Planning for the Department of Conservation.</p> <p>He started his career as a hydrologist with considerable involvement and oversight of river engineering, flood control, and drainage schemes in previous regional and local government roles.</p>
	<p>Peter Ewen, West Coast Regional Council</p> <p>Peter is a long serving Councillor for the West Coast Regional Council with over 20 years experience in local government. He is a former journalist and author of books on the Strongman and Pike River mines.</p>
	<p>Ashley Stuart, Poutini Ngāi Tahu Partnership and Economic Development Manager, West Coast Regional Council</p> <p>Ashley joined West Coast Regional Council in March 2025.</p> <p>Previous to this, she was a Regional Development Private Secretary in Minister Jones' office.</p>

Risks and mitigations




4. No risks identified.

Communications / Media

5. No media will be present.

Annex Three: Meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited

1. On Wednesday, 23 April 2025, you are meeting with representatives from Westpower Limited at ElectroNet Group Offices, 146 Tainui Street, Greymouth. Biographies of attendees are included at paragraph eight.
2. The meeting will take place from 11.30am to 12.30pm and the focus will be on the Waitaha Hydro Project (Waitaha Hydro), which is a partnership between Westpower Limited and Ngāi Tahu (through Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio)¹. You will be given a presentation on Waitaha Hydro.
3. Waitaha Hydro² is a renewable energy project (a 'run-of-the-river' design, reducing environmental impacts) and when completed is expected to generate 25 megawatts, enough to power the equivalent of 12,000 homes.
4. Waitaha Hydro is included in Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Act 2024.
5. Westpower Limited are owned by West Coast Electric Power Trust on behalf of local electors on the West Coast. They supply electricity to approximately 13,000 customers across the Westland, Grey and Buller Districts.
6. ElectroNet Group are specialists in the power industry. The group includes Westpower, Contracting, Consulting and Innovation areas.
7. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Rūnanga o Makaawhio represent Ngāi Tahu interests on the West Coast.
8. Biographies of attendees:

	<p>Peter Armstrong Chief Executive, Westpower Limited</p> <p>Peter was appointed to the role of Chief Executive of Westpower in April 2020. Previously, he held the role of General Manager at Mitton ElectroNet for five years.</p> <p>Peter's background is as a chartered mechanical engineer, and his early career was as a specialist in wind and renewable power generation projects. Since 2010, he has held technical and commercial leadership roles in the transmission and distribution industries, primarily in Australia and New Zealand.</p>
	<p>Sue Merriman, Chair, ElectroNet</p> <p>Sue has been a board member since 2001 and has been Chair since 2020.</p> <p>She is also the Managing Director of Marshal and Heaphy Limited and is a chartered accountant.</p>
	<p>Rodger Griffiths, General Manager, Generation and Technology</p> <p>Roger is an engineer with over 40 experience, primarily with the Westpower network and hydro schemes on the West Coast.</p>

¹ Ngāi Tahu have 18 Papatipu Rūnanga throughout Te Waipounamu. They exist to uphold the mana of their people over the land, the sea and the natural resource – ngaitahu.iwi.nz/ngai-tahu/Papatipu-runanga

² Sourced from: waitahahydro.co.nz

Risks and mitigations

9. No risks identified.

Communications / Media

10. No media will be present.

Annex Four: Visit to the Snowy River Mine

1. On Wednesday, 23 April 2025, you are visiting the Snowy River Mine (previously known as Blackwater Mine) at Ikamatua, West Coast, from 3.45pm to 4.30pm. Snowy River Mine is operated by Federation Mining Pty Limited (Federation Mining). A list of attendees has not been provided.
2. Snowy River is a Tier 1¹ underground gold mine, being developed beneath the historical workings of the Blackwater mine (mined 1906-1951). Snowy River Mine is situated over both conservation and private land.
3. The minerals mining permit for Snowy River is held by Federation Mining, operating as Tasman Mining Limited.
4. Over the past five years, Federation Mining has constructed twin declines that extend 3.3km from private land at the surface, beneath the conservation estate, to a depth of 700m. From there they have further drilled out the resource (from underground), improving confidence in the mineral resource estimate and collecting data to inform and prepare for mine development. All resource consents and access arrangements required to develop the mine have been obtained. The project currently employs over 80 people.
5. AustralianSuper (Australia's largest superannuation fund, with assets of AU\$365 billion) is the majority shareholder in Federation Mining and has invested approximately AU\$200 million to fund the continued development of the mine and completion of the processing plant. Since March 2025, Development West Coast approved an equity investment in the Snowy River Mine of AU\$3 million.

Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa) managed funding

6. Kānoa managed a total of \$15 million for the 'Blackwater Gold Mine Exploration Project' to develop two underground tunnels and ancillary infrastructure to the base of the historic Blackwater gold mine on the West Coast near Reefton. This included exploration work to assess the potential to develop a new modern underground mine.

Risks and mitigations

7. Due to unpredictable weather conditions, appropriate clothing and closed footwear is recommended.
8. No other risks identified.

Communications / Media

9. No media will be present.

¹ New Zealand operates a 'two tiered' permit system under the Crown Minerals Amendment Act 2013. Tier 1 is for more complex, higher-return petroleum and mineral activities.

Annex Five: Visit to the Stockton Mine

1. On Thursday, 24 April 2025, you are visiting the Stockton Mine at Buller Coalfield (approximately 35 kilometres from Westport) from 8.45am to 9.55am. A list of attendees has not been provided.
2. Stockton Mine is owned by BT Mining Limited (BT Mining), a joint venture company between Bathurst Resources Limited (65 per cent) and Talleys Energy Limited (35 per cent) and operated by Bathurst Resources Limited (Bathurst Resources).
3. Stockton Mine is a Tier 1 opencut coal mine (the largest opencut mine in New Zealand), and is located on the Stockton Plateau which is located approximately 25km north-east of Westport. Stockton is the largest employer in the Buller District, employing an estimated 280 staff.
4. BT Mining operates three coal mines in New Zealand obtained as part of the Solid Energy liquidation. The mines are Stockton, Rotowaro and Maramarua. BT Mining contract Bathurst Resources to operate each of the coal mines.
5. Within Stockton Mine, BT Mining operate multiple open cut pits. BT Mining blends coal in varying quantities from these pits and from third party suppliers to obtain the coal quality specifications required to meet its customer order specifications. This is due to the rapid variation in coal quality properties, where the best coking coal is in the west and the poorest quality coking coal is in the east.
6. The mine has 6.4 million tonnes of coal reserves, and in the last financial year, produced 913,000 metric tonnes of coal.
7. Bathurst Resources are an Australian based company and began operating in New Zealand in 2011. Their production is mainly used for steel making, both domestically and international, and they have implemented social and environmental practices into their operations. They also operate mines in Southland and Waikato.
8. A joint venture company encompassing BT Mining and others successfully applied to have the Buller Coal Plateaux project listed in Schedule 2 of the Fast Track Approvals Act (FTA) 2024.
9. The Buller Coal Plateaux project area comprises the existing Stockton and Cypress mines, the existing consented Escarpment and Sullivan pits with new authorisations over Mt Frederick South (an area previously mined). The joint venture announced its intention to lodge its substantive application for the project through the FTA process in June 2025.

Risks and mitigations

10. Due to unpredictable weather conditions, appropriate clothing and closed footwear is recommended.
11. No other risks identified.

Communications / Media

12. No media will be present.

Annex Six: Information about the West Coast region

Key issues in the region

1. Opportunities and challenges for the West Coast have been provided previously (briefing REQ-0009653 refers). These include Significant Natural Areas and Indigenous Biodiversity, Infrastructure, investment in infrastructure to attract housing investment, increases to wholesale electricity prices, housing challenges, healthcare, connectivity, energy and airport infrastructure.
2. You have also been provided information on the West Coast regional economy, regional priorities and linkages to Government initiatives (including Regional Infrastructure Fund, Going For Growth, Fast-track Act 2024, Resource Management Act 1991 reforms, and City and Regional Deals) in the referred briefing.
3. If any queries are raised regarding the above, we recommend you raise these with the relevant minister or officials.

West Coast regional economy – update

4. West Coast's Gross Domestic Product¹ (GDP) was approximately \$2.6 billion in the year to March 2024, representing 0.6 per cent of New Zealand's total GDP.

West Coast tourism sector

5. In the year ended October 2024, 7.9 per cent of people were employed in the tourism industry in the Tasman/Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast region. This is compared to 7.7 per cent in the South Island and 6.9 per cent across all of New Zealand.
6. Across South Island regions, West Coast is the only region that experienced an increase in domestic spending, at 5.1 per cent, for the period January 2024 to January 2025.
7. In the year ended February 2025, West Coast had 1.29 million guest nights, which was slightly lower (4.5 per cent) than the previous year. Overall, total guest nights in the South Island accounted for 42 per cent of total guest nights in New Zealand, which remained unchanged compared to the same month last year.
8. In the year ended January 2025, 25.6 per cent of international visitors into New Zealand arrived via a South Island port. The top five countries for international arrivals were Australia, United States of America, Peoples Republic of China, United Kingdom and India.
9. According to the ASB Regional Scoreboard Quarter 4 2024² report, tourist arrivals are anticipated to increase in the West Coast bringing with it an increase in revenue.

Funding announcements

Regional Infrastructure Fund

10. On 7 March 2025, the Minister for Regional Development announced funding of \$15.3 million³ towards upgrading Hokitika Airport and key port facilities at Greymouth and Westport.
11. Hokitika Airport, will receive a \$9.8 million loan towards its \$16.4 million upgrade to help to reduce flight delays and cancellations, reduce aircraft maintenance costs and increase airport operational safety.

¹ Sourced from: [Regional Economic Activity Web Tool](#), MBIE

² Sourced from: [ASB Regional Scoreboard Q4 2024](#)

³ Sourced from: [RIF support for West Coast projects - Beehive](#)

12. The West Coast Ports Infrastructure upgrade programme will receive a \$5.5 million loan to upgrade Westport Port and Greymouth Port.

Regional Events Promotion Fund

13. The Regional Events Promotion Fund (REPF)¹ is a contestable fund that provides \$5.0 million over two years to support the promotion of regional events to the domestic market. The aim of the fund is to encourage regional dispersal and increase visitor spend in the regions with an additional focus on encouraging seasonal dispersal by promoting events outside of the peak summer season.
14. In July 2024, Development West Coast were awarded \$153,790 for the following events:
 - Around Brunner - \$4,100.
 - Hokitika Wild Foods Festival - \$50,000.
 - Ride the Wilderness - \$3,250.
 - South Island Ultra Marathon - \$4,250.
 - Street Races - \$30,500.
 - True West - \$31,690.
 - Westside Blitz - \$30,000.

Regional Tourism Boost Fund

15. The Regional Tourism Boost Fund (RTBF) was announced on 20 February 2025. It is a contestable fund providing \$3.0 million (funded through the International Conservation and Tourism Visitor Levy) to support regions to attract more international visitors and encourage dispersal of international visitors around the country.
16. Activities funded by the RTBF will be delivered between April and July 2025 and will target Autumn/Winter visitation.
17. On 27 March 2025, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality² announced six initiatives to drive international visitor numbers from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South Island.
18. Five of the six initiatives are in the South Island. Information on these were provided to you in the Fortnightly Report – 1 April 2025 (briefing REQ-0011908 refers). The following initiatives are related to the West Coast:
 - \$170,000 for a top of the South initiative led by Development West Coast for promotional activities encouraging Australians to visit for luxury experiences.
 - \$600,000 for a central South Island initiative led by ChristchurchNZ for a winter-focused marketing campaign encouraging Australians to travel to the Canterbury and West Coast regions.

¹ Sourced from: [Regional Events Promotion Fund](#)

² Sourced from: [Regional Tourism Boosts drive international growth - Beehive](#)