

AIDE MEMOIRE

Heritage Expeditions event – talking points

Date:	5 March 2025	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	Unclassified	Tracking number:	REQ-0010556

Information for Minister(s)

Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Karl Woodhead	General Manager, Strategy, Planning and Performance, Kānoa – Regional Development & Commercial Services (Kānoa – RD & Commercial Services)	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Sam Blackburn	Principal Policy Advisor, Kānoa – RD & Commercial Services	Privacy of natural persons	

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

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Minister's office to complete:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Approved | ☐ Declined |
| ☐ Noted | ☐ Needs change |
| ☐ Seen | ☐ Overtaken by Events |
| ☐ See Minister's Notes | ☐ Withdrawn |

Comments

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Date:	5 March 2025	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	REQ-0010556

Purpose

To provide you with talking points to support your attendance at the Heritage Expeditions event on Friday 7 March 2025.



Karl Woodhead
**General Manager, Strategy, Planning and
Performance, Kānoa – Regional
Development & Commercial Services**
Ministry of Business, Innovation and
Employment

05 / 03 / 2025

Background

1. You will be a keynote speaker at the Heritage Expeditions event on Friday 7 March 2025, hosted aboard the Heritage Adventurer in Wellington. Your office has requested talking points so that they can be added to full speech notes.
2. Talking points are attached as **Annex One**.
3. The event celebrates the partnership between Heritage Expeditions and Ngāi Tahu, and ongoing contributions to conservation, sustainable tourism, and regional development.
4. You will be speaking first, with your keynote address “reaffirming Government’s commitment to environmental stewardship, regional investment, and youth development in science, conservation and ecotourism”. The order of the remaining speakers is as follows:
 - a. Tā Tipene O’Reagan, Murihiku Regeneration.
 - b. Pre-recorded message from Hon Tama Potaka, Minister for Conservation.
 - c. Nathan Russ, Operations Director and Expedition leader, Heritage Expeditions.
5. The Rt Hon Gerry Brownlee will also be in attendance.

Annexes

Annex One – Talking points

Annex One – Talking points

Acknowledgements

1. I acknowledge the following attendees:
 - a. Tā Tipene O'Regan, long-serving former Chairman of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.
 - b. The Rt Hon Gerry Brownlee, Speaker of the House.
 - c. Lawrence Meredith, European Union Ambassador to New Zealand.
 - d. Nicole Menzenbach, German Ambassador to New Zealand.
 - e. Japan's Deputy Ambassador to New Zealand.
 - f. The Russ Family as hosts of the event and the founders and owners of Heritage Expeditions.
 - g. Sir Peter Gluckman, President of the International Science Council and Chair of the Government's Science System Advisory Group.
2. I acknowledge the rūnanga, marae and the tribes of the South Island from the top to the bottom.
3. I acknowledge Heritage Expedition's partnership with Ngāi Tahu. In particular, Heritage Expedition has partnered with the Murihiku Regeneration project, established by Hokonui Rūnanga, to work closely and collaboratively with the Crown, giving voice and meaning to local Treaty obligations to Ngāi Tahu, and ensuring a clear, coherent plan for a prosperous and more sustainable Murihiku/Southland.
4. Heritage Expeditions is celebrating its 40-year anniversary as New Zealand's first, and only, family-owned expedition cruise company, operated out of Christchurch. Founded by conservationists Rodney and Shirley Russ in 1984, Heritage Expeditions is still New Zealand family-owned and operated, now by the second generation of Russes, Rodney and Shirley's sons Aaron and Nathan who took over the family business in 2019.

The economic opportunity for the South Island

5. The Government has launched its *Going for Growth* economic strategy to make New Zealand's economy grow faster, to increase living standards and opportunities for all New Zealanders.
6. Heritage Expeditions is an example of a small but growing New Zealand business, realising some of the potential of the Southern Ocean through eco-tourism and partnering with Ngāi Tahu.
7. I'm very proud to be the country's first Minister for the South Island. One of my key priorities is focusing on specific opportunities across the South Island to support the Government's objectives, including through enabling more businesses like Heritage Expeditions to develop and grow.
8. I am looking forward to working across central and local government and creating straightforward communication channels with businesses and communities, to ensure needs and opportunities are heard and the potential of the South Island is realised. I want to make sure that the South Island economy gets its fair share of economic and job growth.

Regional economic development

9. Each region of the South Island offers different strengths and opportunities that benefit both its communities and the potential of wider New Zealand. From the Blue Economy of Te Taihū, to the natural beauty of Otago, to the resources of the West Coast, and the agricultural strengths of Canterbury and Southland, the South Island's regions will play an important role in the Government's economic growth objectives.
10. Through programmes such as the Regional Infrastructure Fund and City & Regional Deals, the Government has mechanisms in place to enhance regions' role in New Zealand's economic growth, in particular through supporting investment in critical infrastructure for productivity and resilience and long-term collaboration between central and local government to deliver long-term visions for the regions.
11. The Regional Infrastructure Fund continues to consider potential projects, and the Government has already committed \$45.88 million to South Island projects through investments in flood resilience and aquaculture.
12. City & Regional Deals will be based on a 30-year vision with a ten-year strategic plan for a region to deliver shared objectives and outcomes between local and central governments.
13. City & Regional Deals will be a vehicle for:
 - a. greater regional collaboration and coordination
 - b. improved certainty in local government decision-making, funding, and financing
 - c. promoting innovative and collaborative ways of working between central and local government
 - d. ensuring resilient cities and regions.
14. City & Regional Deals will seek to promote economic growth and productivity, delivering connected and resilient infrastructure, and improving the supply of affordable, quality housing.
15. Proposals from regional groupings for City & Regional Deals have now been received and the government will consider these.

Tourism

16. Heritage Expedition's mission is to increase awareness and conservation of the natural world through responsible expedition travel. It is great to see Heritage Expeditions instilling this approach to the combined messages of adventure and conservation to the next generation through its partnership with True Young Explorer, to provide scholarships for young people to join their expeditions.
17. Heritage Expeditions has shown the growth possibilities of the South Island through travel and tourism expeditions particularly through the Southern Ocean and to Antarctica, while remaining ambassadors for conservation.
18. Tourism is a key contributor to the South Island's economy.
19. The Government has a clear priority to unleash economic growth, and tourism, as New Zealand's second largest export, is critical to the Government's economic growth goals. Additional international visitors will be vital to drive economic growth.

20. The South Island accounts for 40 per cent of New Zealand's international tourism spend, 31 percent of the domestic tourism spend, and 43 per cent of the guest nights in the country are spent in the South Island.
21. We need to work together to ensure that we maximise the tourism experience and spend in the South Island. We must do this in a way which takes into account infrastructure needs and concerns, using things like the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy, as well as the general taxation pot and the funding that the Government provides, and creating those City & Regional Deals.

The Government has announced a new Regional Tourism Boost fund to support regional promotion.

22. The \$3 million fund aims to attract more international visitors to the regions and encourage international visitors to see more parts of the country, primarily focussing on the Autumn and Winter seasons.
23. Regions applying for this fund will be expected to collaborate to promote visitation to their regions and have capacity to host the new visitors they are planning to attract.