



The Kapiti Coast Day Out A lowering carbon pilot

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Summary Report
prepared by
the Hikurangi Foundation

In cooperation with



CONTENTS

Introduction: The story of Carbon and Tourism	Page 2
Background: The Kapiti Coast Day Out Pilot	Page 3
Let the Day Begin	Page 4
Sharing Stories	Page 5-8
Conclusions: What we now know	Page 9
Did it Work?	Page 10
Now what? Next steps.	Page 11
Contacts	Page 12

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Introduction: The story of carbon and tourism

This is a modest but important story from a lovely part of Aotearoa – the Kapiti Coast – an hour north of Wellington, and an hour south-west from Palmerston North. This story has the potential to benefit every New Zealander and it goes like this; smart action can deliver great holidays, strong local economies, and less carbon emissions.

The story of carbon and tourism

Like all good stories, this one started from inquisitiveness: How is New Zealand going to make its living in a world where carbon emissions must be limited in order to avoid dangerous climate change?

The scientific consensus tells us that climate change is already happening and that human activity (such as burning fossil fuels like oil) is the very likely (a more than 90% chance) cause of the warming effect we are seeing. Experts around the world have warned that, in order to curb the extremely serious impacts of this pollution, we make we need to decrease carbon emissions (here used as a short hand term for all greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide – CO₂) by around 80% by 2050.

New Zealand will have to do its fair share in that endeavour and in turn each sector in our economy will have to make its contribution. And that includes tourism.

Tourism contributes \$20 billion every year in economic activity. But tourism is responsible for 6% of total carbon emissions (not counting those from international aviation), and, it's the fastest growing sector in terms of emissions in New Zealand. Not many people know that three quarters of the carbon footprint of tourism here is from Kiwis on holiday, not international tourists. In turn, three quarters of that is from the transport we use (mainly cars and domestic planes).

The good news is decreasing carbon emissions from domestic tourism is very likely to be to New Zealand's advantage. It fits with our clean green image, and can strengthen local economies and help them become more resilient to inevitable changes in fuel prices and travel patterns.

The Hikurangi Foundation is a charity dedicated to helping Kiwis take smart action on climate change. It has set out to catalyse relevant research and practical projects to help boost domestic tourism while making it lower carbon. Hikurangi has a philosophy of partnership working and learning through action.

The Kapiti Coast Day Out, on which this report is based, was a project created to pilot solutions and create opportunities for Kapiti and for New Zealand as a whole.

This story belongs to everyone.

Background: The Kapiti Coast Day Out Pilot

Opportunity Knocks

Inspired to see how Kiwi holidays could be part of the solution, The Hikurangi Foundation set out to instigate some action. Enter the main character in our story – The Kapiti Coast.

This was the perfect place to test the waters:

- The Kapiti Coast is an hour from Wellington and was already looking at attracting more “backyard” visitors to the area. It has great train access, which is usually a lower carbon means of transport than the car;
- But there is a gap: 20-30% of all visitors who catch the train from Wellington to Kapiti often feel let down when they arrive in Paraparaumu because its hard to get around the various tourist attractions (such as the nature reserve at Nga Manu near Waikanae). This is due to a lack of convenient connecting transport;
- There are some movers and shakers in the region that were already promoting the area as a great Kiwi holiday where you could create life-long memories like skimming stones, digging for pipis, and visiting nature reserves;
- There was a window of opportunity to influence local government and other government agencies, as crucial infrastructure decisions, like the future of rail services and local buses, were being made.

Was there potential to plug the transport gaps so people could leave their cars at home? Would tourism operators want to work together? Would it be possible to create a great day out yet lower carbon at the same time? Was it worth going to all this trouble?

A better world— for one day?

In order to put these ideas to the test it was decided to create a potentially better world in Kapiti for just one day. In this world tourists were happy to choose lower carbon transport options, not because they had a ‘green’ approach, but because the outcome for them and their families would be fun and have perceived extra value. The idea of ‘hosting’ a day like this was very exciting and fitted perfectly with Hikurangi’s kaupapa.

*“It’s a half hour walk to Nga Manu and that’s after they’ve already caught a bus from the railway station. People get frustrated: It’s not a nice part of our job.”
I-SITE staff member.*

Let the Day Begin

Delivering the day

Where there is a will there is a way! It didn't take long to get all the major characters in the Kapiti area together:

- The local council, Kapiti Coast District Council;
- Three operators – Nga Manu Nature Reserve, Southward Car Museum, and Wellington Tramway Museum;
- Nature Coast – the economic and tourism agency;
- Tranz Metro the train operator; and
- Hikurangi and a project coordinator had the job to keep them all focussed on a common goal, and offer support.

Aim

The aim of the pilot was to understand more about how to boost the benefit the Kapiti Coast receives from tourism while lowering tourism's transport carbon footprint. The pilot also set out to involve partners and create learning that could be used both in Kapiti and in other regions.

The Objectives

1. Lower carbon than business as usual;
2. A positive response from visitors about a day out in Kapiti;
3. Involvement of local tourism operators;
4. More understanding about what the visitors would need to make lower carbon transport choices;
5. To find out what it would take for Kapiti Coast to provide lower carbon transport choices.

How we did it

The pilot created a special day out where a sample of visitors from Wellington could experience the Kapiti Coast when great hospitality and potentially lower carbon means of transport were joined up. The pilot was promoted and delivered as a great day out with the carbon side much less emphasised:

- The project partners worked together to design and deliver the day;
- 150 visitors from Wellington were recruited through promotion;
- Free Day Rover train tickets and information packs were sent to visitors;
- On the day 59 groups were given a warm welcome and low carbon transport alternatives; free shuttles, free bikes, and walking options.
- They filled in a survey and were interviewed by a journalist. A control group of 40 people who drove to Kapiti were also surveyed.



Sharing Stories



Three generations of the Lee family came off the train from Wellington. They were well packed. Mum Karen wasn't used to travelling without a car and didn't know what to bring; so she brought the lot. Karen said they visit Kapiti often, but not usually for the whole day. Usually they're just passing through in a hurry as they travel further up north so stopping doesn't make much sense. "Time is slower today because we don't have to worry about driving and find parks," she said. "We're relaxing and hanging out more. I like that."

Vicki saw the advertisement in the Dominion Post and was really looking forward to the day. The idea of being part of a trial really interested her as she lives her life with awareness of the environment. Jo was roped in at the last minute. They decided to cycle along Wharemauku Stream first and then would decide what to do next.



Gertrude had never seen a pukeko before. Even the ducks at Nga Manu Nature Reserve fascinated her. She was travelling on her own and said this was her first time to the Kapiti Coast. As she talked a duck waddled past and lifted its wing to reveal a bright blue feather. Gertrude almost squealed and rummaged through her bag to share some of the bread she'd brought for her own lunch. As she fed the ducks she said, "There. I've had a duck experience."



This young family wanted a day where their daughter could really enjoy herself. They'd planned and did go to Lindale and Southward Car Museum. They visit the coast every three or four months, always having lunch somewhere. "We know the area but there are places we haven't been to yet. Today's a good day to discover them." They loved the idea of taking bikes and suggest there are kid's seats provided next time.



Rhys and Charmaine ventured this way for our Kapiti ice cream. Even knowing that it's no longer made on the Kapiti Coast didn't spoil their intentions. The low carbon idea didn't play much of a part. Charmaine doesn't like driving on the state highway, so the opportunity to catch the train was a good one. "You don't need to worry when you're on the train," she said. They don't venture out of Wellington much and in a way, coming here was to return to a childhood sense of adventure.

This was Arun, Revathi, Sauvaghi and Shweta's first time on the Kapiti Coast, even though they've lived in Wellington for some time. They didn't know about the low-carbon day but when they made general enquiries at the Visitor Information Centre, they agreed to take part. Feeling part of an organised structure made them feel more confident to venture out.



Dave and Shelley brought their three kids and headed for the beach. Fletch (3), Maya (5) and Brynn (7) didn't need any props for play other than the waves, sand, and some sticks. Not having to spend money on petrol was an attraction. "It's a big saving for us," said Shelley. "And we wouldn't have been able to get around so many activities if we'd had to drive." Young Fletcher liked the transport part of the day—the train, the shuttle, the tram. "He's not just stuck in a boring car seat," said Shelley. When they think of Kapiti they think of Lindale and beaches. "We're



It was her sister that encouraged Jane to take the trip up the coast. She came with her nephew, Kruz, and partner Darren. They live in Newtown and regularly catch public transport. They thought it was a great day to use the bikes at the Visitors Information Centre but there wasn't one small enough for Kruz. "We don't drive," said Darren. "So this is right up our alley." "I remember coming to QEII Park when I was a kid," said Jane. "We'd play spotlight when it got dark."



Heather and Owen are from the UK and have lived in Wellington for six months. They'd heard about Kapiti but have never been here, as people said they needed a car to see anything. "It would have been annoying getting around," said Heather. The low-carbon aspect of the day didn't initially motivate them into coming, but as travel agent Heather thought about it, the more she realised that carbon miles is not only a part of her work, but could be a part of her personal life too. They said they would even pay \$5 for an all-day shuttle service in the future. "I like the freedom of being able to get on and off. It gives you the chance to take in a bit more."

Getting out and about and being active is something Harvey and Kyla-Jayne support. They live in Petone and were particularly interested in the bike option. "We were keen to at least ride for part of the day," said Harvey. But they got lost on their journey which meant they spent most of the day cycling around. "We were going to Lembas Café but somehow ended up along Wharemauku Stream," said Kyla-Jayne. "It was stunning. We wouldn't have known about it if it wasn't for this day."



Jutta is thinking of making a permanent move from Wellington to Kapiti. Daughter Nicki came up with her, making it a neat mother-daughter day out. Nicki thought the low-carbon day idea was convenient, fun, and free. If it was offered again she'd use the bikes. In fact she thinks the Visitor Information Centre should offer bikes for hire all the time.



Sue came with her mother and son. She hasn't been to the Kapiti Coast since she was a kid when they came for Sunday drives. They'd go down to the beach and the playground. She hadn't thought much about the low carbon thing—it was just a chance to show Matthew around.



Bethany and Marc took the day to chance some steep adventure; they tackled one of Kapiti's steepest walks, Kapakapanui. It wasn't accessible by shuttle so they enlisted the help of a local friend, Emily, who drove them to the start of the track and walked with them. "An email went around work about the day and I thought it was a great idea.



Kapiti is such an amazing part of the Wellington region. But people just drive through it," said Bethany. Being mindful of the environment did play a part in their day, especially for Bethany. "We're tourists but we're not shopping," she says. "We're enjoying the landscape. The better we take care of it, the longer we can enjoy it."

Conclusions: What we now know

What the visitors said:

OPUS consultants surveyed visitors about their attitudes to transport, and reactions to the day. The sample was made up of people who usually come to Kapiti by car and tend to go to more than one attraction. But probably more than seven out of ten of them were not dead against trains in general or trains to Kapiti; they just didn't think the infrastructure was there to get around Kapiti without a car. They said better connecting services and cheaper ticketing were needed.

People were positive about their day out. The pilot day shuttles got a big thumbs up, and with a bit of refinement on timetables, 90% might use them in the future. A smaller but significant number (over 6 out of ten) liked the idea of bikes too. As a result of trying out the lower carbon transport options pilot day visitors were twice as likely as those who didn't experience it for themselves to say their next visit would be by train (or bus). That's over a third already prepared to get on the train (or bus) to Kapiti again.

Did we save any carbon?

The pilot set out to find if there was potential "to save carbon" through transport choices. We couldn't do a fully scientific carbon footprint assessment. Instead we calculated some estimates based on some assumptions that have probably underestimated the savings made (which are set out in the full technical report). Three transport choices have been compared:

Alternative destination:

All participants were asked where they would have travelled on the day of the event if they had not been included and they reported an average trip distance of 10.96km. Which equates to 311.66 kg of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent).

Business as Usual Kapiti visit:

This consists of car journeys to Kapiti and within Kapiti. The average trip distance to Kapiti is 45.29km. Add to that a low estimate that each party drove only one 6 km loop. That's a total of 1371.31 kg CO₂e.

The Kapiti day out:

This involves a train journey to Kapiti and shuttle journeys within Kapiti. The estimate of the leg by train is 240.5 kg CO₂e. The mini van shuttles travelled 722 km, this equates to of 529.3 kg CO₂e.

Comparisons

Overall, using assumptions which were most likely to have over estimated The Kapiti Day Out footprint, the pilot Kapiti Day Out appears to be 217.6 kg more than the claimed alternate destinations. Compared to Business as Usual the pilot appears to have saved at least 844 kg.; that is a greater than 60 per cent saving.

In practice, a more permanent arrangement should be able to make more savings through a number of measures including:

- Verification of emissions for journeys (train and shuttle);
- Optimisation of shuttle timetables and occupancy;
- Choice of fuel for shuttles;
- Public transport to the station in Wellington;
- Enabling more walking and cycling;
- Checking the comparability of alternate destinations.

We did it – it looks like we created a day out that people enjoyed and used significantly less carbon than a usual visit by car.

Did it work?

Yes. The partners are now investigating more permanent changes, including:

- Developing a Kapiti Coast train travel pass;
- Negotiating with Greater Wellington Regional Council how local bus routes could accommodate this pass and investigating other options for a tourism shuttle service;
- Using Paraparaumu Railway station to display signage for promotions and travel information;
- Bringing bike hire to visitors centres
- Promoting smart travel choices and referring visitors to partner attractions

“In this industry you set up experiences like this for people but you never get to hear how they really feel about it. Often tourism people burn out because of that I think. Today is different. Everyone comes together and you realise you’re proud to show off your own backyard.”

Chris Barber, shuttle driver and Nature Coast’s
Tourism Manager.

“With projects like this the savings for individuals are small, but collectively they are huge.”

Nga Manu Nature Reserve

Did it work for the Hikurangi Foundation?

Yes. A lot has been learned:

Liana Stupples of the Hikurangi Foundation says, “It was fantastic to learn through doing with Kapiti partners. There was something about creating a real visitor experience—even if only for a day - that was more valuable than just another piece of desk research.

“For the visitors too, it seemed that experiencing something new, in a low stress way, made a difference. Those in the pilot were twice as likely as the control group to say they would use the train or bus next time.

“We are pleased that for a small investment from all partners we have catalysed something that looks like it will last. We will make sure that what has been learned here is available to people in transport and tourism at local, regional and national level.

“Thanks Kapiti.”

Now what? Next steps

Could it work for other regions?

Yes. And remember:

- There's potential for a new breed of lower carbon backyard tourism that is well suited to the current economic and environmental conditions;
- A focus on transport is the key to lowering tourism's carbon footprint;
- There are implications for national infrastructure: We need cycleways, trains and buses and better information provision, ticketing and marketing;
- We can focus beyond 'green marketing' into smart mainstream marketing. Promoting tourism can go hand-in-hand with lower carbon emissions;
- A Partnership approach is key: Projects like this can motivate cooperation across individual operators to achieve something for their whole region;
- The pilot approach can be adapted to the particular challenges in different localities – the key is trying to provide an attractive and integrated transport alternative to visitors backed up by robust market research.

This low carbon tourism pilot project ticks all the boxes and has provided some valuable data to further refine the concept.
Kapiti Coast District Council.

"Because of the pilot, people like Tranz Metro now have the facts and they know what's possible."

Nature Coast.

Can we have some more please?

The Hikurangi Foundation wants to catalyse two more pilots in other parts of the country. Maybe you work at the council, or own a tourist venue and like the idea of working with other tourist operators. If you've got an idea for piloting a low carbon day out, please visit www.hikurangi.org.nz for more information.

The final word:

The Kapiti Coast Day Out is one modest story of practical action towards climate positive change in the domestic tourism sector. Yes, the end result was probably lower carbon emissions, but the middle of the story is equally as interesting: We did it by helping kiwis do the things they love: a day out with family; a trip to the beach. We found a new market in harder economic times. We helped a community work together to try something new. Did it pay off? You tell us.

**What's your next step?
Spread the word.
Tell us what you think.**

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