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For Immediate Release

Hawke's Bay's Visitor Industry Think Tank Sets Course for Action

A recent Tourism Think Tank brought together a focused group of twenty key creative thinkers and entrepreneurs, many internationally renowned, and most with a significant investment in Hawke's Bay, including tourism operations.

The Think Tank, the initiative of new Hawke's Bay Wine Country Tourism Association Chairman, Sam Orton, aimed to brainstorm how to identify and reinforce a shared direction and momentum for the Hawke's Bay visitor industry and therefore benefit the region.

Facilitated by Auckland-based international marketing consultant Kate Smith, the Think Tank was co-funded by Venture Hawke's Bay, the Napier City and Hastings District Councils and HB Wine Country Tourism Association (HBWCTA).

The brand experts at the Think Tank highlighted that a specific, quantifiable, believable hook was required for brand success, especially a destination brand like Hawke's Bay, which needs higher visibility to give it international and domestic appeal.

Participants unanimously agreed that more time and resource should be spent optimising and re-energising the existing Food and Wine strategy through the 'Hawke's Bay Wine Country' brand, so successfully launched in 2001.

As a result of the Think Tank, Venture Hawke's Bay and HBWCTA, have agreed an Action Plan, to implement and develop the ideas raised at the Think Tank. The Plan includes a range of activities, many of which are underway already. For example the development of a Regional Visitor Intelligence Plan and Monitor, in conjunction with the NZ Tourism Research Institute, based at AUT in Auckland. "Most people in the industry see an urgent need for information on who our visitors are, why are they

coming, and what gives them the most satisfaction when they are here.” says Venture Hawke’s Bay Chair Neil Kirton.

“This work on market intelligence will allow us to make ongoing measurement of key areas possible with local partners, such as EIT Hawke’s Bay.”

Another key project underway is the advancement and implementation of a Regional Events Strategy. “Events are a key driver for a longer visitor season. Giving people a reason to visit outside of their standard holiday cycle can really help make our tourism industry more viable, and therefore benefit the whole region, by bringing in spenders from out side Hawke’s Bay. More visitors equals more money in the local economy, more jobs for locals, and a happier region.” says HBWCTA Executive Officer, Megan Harris.

In recognition of the Think Tank agreement that Venture Hawkes Bay’s role is to market the region nationally and internationally and HBWCTA and industry’s role is to make sure visitors have a good time and come back, the Association is planning a series of meetings with different sub-sectors of operators over the next few months to communicate the Think Tank results and Action Plan, and to encourage better consultation and representation across the industry. The first meeting, with accommodation providers, will be held on May 11th.

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