

Guiding Principles of AGBI Destination Management Plan

Introduction

The Aotea Great Barrier Island (AGBI) Destination Management Plan outlines key principles guiding the sustainable development and management of the motu as a unique tourist destination. This report summarizes the guiding principles discussed during a recent meeting, emphasizing the need for sustainable development, preservation of the environment, community engagement, and effective management strategies.

A Unique Place:

AGBI is envisioned as a destination offering a distinctive experience, characterized by its diversity and natural beauty. Key points include:

- Emphasis on diversity rather than a single eco-lodge.
- Circular transport system to facilitate exploration.
- Affordable costs to encourage family visits.
- Preservation of unique natural assets like wilderness, beaches, and cultural heritage.
- Promotion of AGBI as *"An Island experience like no other."*

A Sustainable and Resilient Place:

AGBI aims to transition towards a low-emissions visitor economy while advocating for environmental well-being. Key strategies include:

- Development of an eco-destination brand, learning from international eco-destination models
- Collaboration with environmental groups on the motu to develop volunteer tourism.
- Incremental sustainability initiatives.
- Learning from international eco-destination models.

A Connected Place:

AGBI strives to maintain economic, social, and environmental sustainability through effective planning and connectivity. Key aspects include:

- Prioritisation of the needs of the community and environment over those of visitor. A thriving community and environment will deliver upon a valued visitor experience.
- Island-specific solutions for cost-effectiveness.
- Enhanced logistics for accessibility and infrastructure capacity.

An Insightful Place:

AGBI aims to make evidence-based decisions to support business viability while preserving identity and community resilience. Key strategies include:

- Data collection from visitors to determine behaviour and spend –conducted between Dec – April. (The value and measurement frameworks need to be locally decided with community aspirations as the determining factors on the creation of what indicators of success look like.)
- Opportunity to collaborate with research expertise and/or transport operators for informed decision-making.
- Provide networking opportunities for residents and business operators to share knowledge and discuss ways in which they can collectively work together for the benefit of all. Monitor resident sentiment on an annual basis towards tourism.

A Place of Partnerships and Planning:

AGBI emphasizes collaboration and community involvement in planning, ensuring social license and prosperity for all stakeholders. Key points include:

- Explore partnership opportunities for showcasing environment and culture.
- Infrastructure maintenance and capacity planning.
- Develop strategies for attracting international visitors.

A Captivating Place

AGBI enriches visitor experiences while giving back to the community and environment. Key strategies include:

- Promotion of authentic local experiences and food. Include sharing of stories and history of the motu to educate the visitor on why this place is a taonga of the great Tāmaki Makaurau Region.
- Support for small-scale events and accommodation providers.
- Enhancement of website presence for managing visitor expectations.

Challenges:

- Tension for some residents during peak season – Is there an optimum visitor number on the motu in peak season?
- Cost to travel to the Island both for residents and visitors can be inhibitive, but transport operators need to be financially viable to survive. A balance needs to be struck.

Action Points

- Formation of a steering committee for coordinated efforts.
- Exploration of funding mechanisms, including a visitor levy.
- Consideration of establishing a destination management office.

Conclusion

The guiding principles outlined in the AGBI Destination Management Plan underscore the commitment to sustainable development, community engagement, and preservation of the island's unique character. Effective implementation of these principles will ensure a thriving destination that benefits both locals and visitors while safeguarding the environment and essence of place for future generations.

Visitors to Aotea Great Barrier Island are looking for destinations that offer distinct and engaged experiences reflecting a unique sense of place. Aotea offers a unique opportunity, in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Aotearoa New Zealand, to be off the grid, to slow the pace of life down, and experience the unique resilience of the community. These are all also the reasons why people choose to live there, and preservation of these qualities is crucial.