

# **Information Centre**

## **Activity Management Plan 2006**

**Stratford District Council**

Appendix H of LTCCP

# Information Centre Activity Management Plan

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The Stratford District Council owns and manages the Stratford Information Centre. The Information Centre was officially opened in the old Stratford Borough Council offices in April 1990. In November 1990 the Stratford Information Centre was accepted for membership within the Visitor Information Network New Zealand wide.

VIN Inc and Tourism New Zealand have a relationship agreement that recognises the importance of having an effective and high quality network of Visitor Information Centres, providing objective visitor information to visitors in New Zealand.

In 2001 VIN Inc and TNZ developed a new brand for the VIN Network (i-SITE) that incorporates the TNZ 'fern mark' establishing a link with TNZ's international marketing campaign which now endorses 'Qualmark'.

In 2002 the Information Centre took on the AA Express Agency which works in partnership with Land Transport Safety Authority (now known as Land Transport NZ) and process Driver and Vehicle Licensing.

The Information Centre is located within the Percy Thomson complex in Prospero Place. It provides an open, well lit area which gives ample room for the display of brochures, souvenirs and AA Driver & Vehicle Licensing booth. The Centre is directly managed and staffed by Council.

The Information Centre is open Monday to Friday 8.30 am - 5.00 pm and on weekends and public holidays between 10.00 am - 3.00 pm. It is closed on Christmas Day.

Income is generated through retail sales, commissionable travel, accommodation and activity sales and general and targeted rates.

### 1.2 LTCCP Community Priorities

In preparing the LTCCP Council has used both current and new information concerning community outcomes. To arrive at the Regional outcomes research was undertaken in conjunction with our two neighbouring Local Authorities, New Plymouth District Council and South Taranaki District Council and the Regional Authority, Taranaki Regional Council. The four Councils appointed AC Nielsen Ltd to identify community desired outcomes for the regional community; those desired outcomes that will add to or sustain the communities well-being.

The community was actively engaged in the process to identify what they considered important and which five outcomes they thought required most attention over the next five years. While the primary focus was on outcomes common to the regional community each district was required to identify any local preferences.

The Stratford community was directly consulted on key outcomes for the district and these have formed the basis for Councils LTCCP.

The Regional and Stratford community outcomes to which the Information Centre primarily contributes are addressed in Volume One, Chapter "Levels of Service/Performance Measures" of the LTCCP.

### 1.3 Stratford Information Centre Goals and Objectives

In line with Visitor Information Network Inc (VIN Inc) Strategic Plan with their Vision:

*“To be recognised globally as the most valued source of New Zealand visitor information and travel services”.*

With their Mission being:

*“To provide quality objective information so that visitor’s within New Zealand are advocates of i-SITE visitor services and destination New Zealand”.*

and to assist with the New Zealand AA’s vision of being a leading provider. Our principal objectives are:

- (a) To provide a ‘one stop shop’ to meet all visitor and residents travel and AA needs.
- (b) To maintain or increase the number of people using the services provided by the Information Centre.
- (c) To provide a friendly and helpful atmosphere that will encourage people to recommend to others the Information Centre as the place to go for good information and service.
- (d) To liaise with local, regional and national tourism operators.
- (e) To enhance the visitors experience through the promotion of quality products and the provision of quality tourism services.

## 2. Levels of Service and Detailed Activities

The levels of service and performance measures are discussed in Volume One of the LTCCP under the chapter "Levels Of Service/Performance Measures".

### 2.1 Provision

The Visitor Information Network Inc accreditation to the Network (90 offices in New Zealand) whose vision is to be recognised globally as the most valued source of New Zealand visitor information and travel services.

This Network assists with the provision, planning, operations and management of the Information Centre and can be benchmarked against national and regional trends.

As the Automobile Association Agent for Stratford the Information Centre provides Driver and Vehicle licensing services to the Stratford and wider communities.

### 2.2 Customer Service

Customer service is an integral part of the Information Centres operation. For the community and Council to obtain the best value from the Information Centre investment, visitors and users have to feel welcome and willing to return or utilise the services of another i-SITE in the Network. This measure monitors customer’s perception of service through user complaints and surveys.

### 2.3 Disabled Access

All the community has the right to access the Information Centre. The building and facilities should comply with access standards for the disabled as outlined in the Building Act and other related legislation.

## 2.4 Cost of Service

The Information Centre generates some income through souvenir retail sales, commissionable travel, accommodation, activity sales and AA Driver and Vehicle Licensing. The balance of funding required to operate the Information Centre is through rates.

## 2.5 Quality of Product

In any business it is important that product either souvenir or travel ticket is sold within the constraints of the Fair Trading Act and The Consumers Guarantees Act. The retail product is kept up to date is of good quality and displayed to turn over quickly.

AA Driver & Vehicle Licensing enquiries are processed accurately to the customer's individual requirements.

## 2.6 Levels of Service Issues

This plan is based on a construction of existing hours of operation. As part of the VIN Accreditation the Information Centre must be open a minimum of 48 hours per week, over seven days per week. Seasonal variation reducing hours of operation may be approved subject to application to VIN Inc and community consultation.

Hours have been changed over the years to reflect changing customer/visitor requirements and VIN requirements. There is question over the Sunday hours of operation during the winter season although it would have no major impact on the long term financial plan as these hours could be transferred to glide time hours during the week.

There are some Information Centres in satellite areas throughout New Zealand that are solely manned by volunteers, these Centres are not i-SITE accredited and do not provide a full travel service. We have moved from staffing with Volunteers due to the increased services provided generating a commissionable income for the travel sales, AA and souvenir sales, putting a volunteer under pressure to handle booking services and monetary income.

The other main contribution to the Community is providing the AA Driver and Vehicle Licensing facilities. The impact to local community should we not provide this service would necessitate them travelling out of town to action any part of their licence (theory and practical to all levels).

## 3. The Existing Situation Described

### 3.1 The Facility and Service

The Information Centre is located within the Percy Thomson Complex in the Stratford township at Prospero Place, off Broadway and Miranda Street. This is the sole district Information Centre and AA Agent throughout the district.

The Percy Thomson complex has the Art Gallery, Collage Café, the Information Centre and Public Toilets. The Public Trust rent the small office once a week for Stratford Community clientele and the other office is used by community groups as a meeting room.

### 3.2 Current Use

The Information Centre has a mixture of local, other New Zealanders and overseas visitors that use the Centre. Statistical information gathered has seen an increase of visitors over the years with the original 17,000 visitors seen in the first year of operation 1990, through to an average of 47,000 visitors over the last three years.

The number of local and overseas visitors per year is an indicator of the success and support the Information Centre gains from the community and wider. Numbers can not totally be attributed to the performance or the value the community places on the Information Centre but they can indicate local use for travel, information and AA trends that may require further investigation.

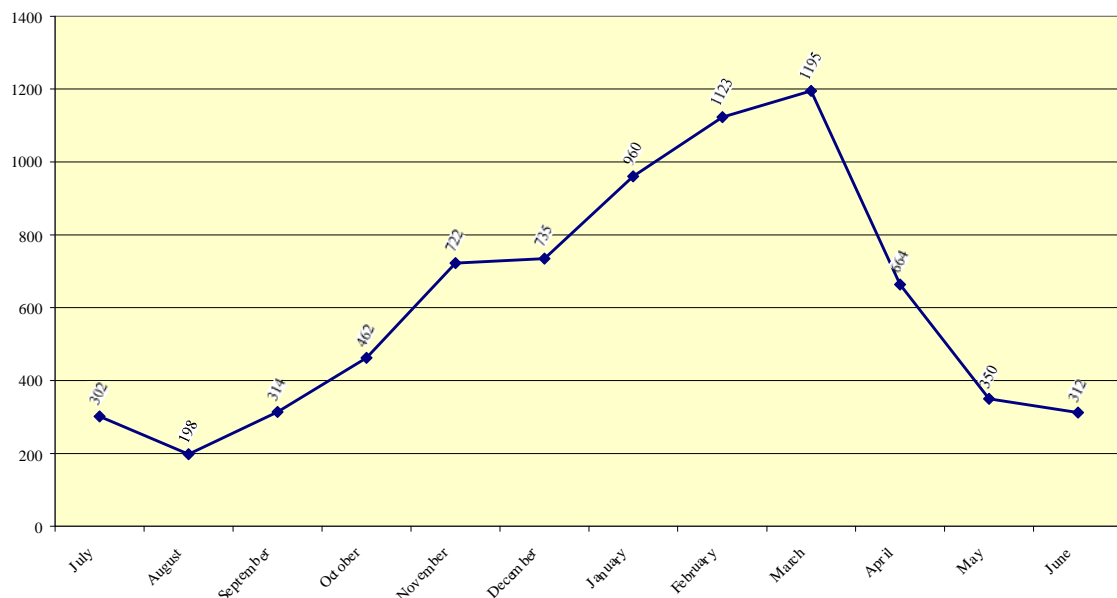
#### HISTORICAL VISITOR NUMBERS

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
July	2,353	1,843	3,956	3,957	3,973	3,902
August	1,746	1,601	2,704	3,314	3,116	3,754
September	2,089	1,660	3,312	3,619	3,865	4,040
October	2,628	2,353	4,973	3,760	3,468	3,931
November	2,538	2,428	3,976	4,274	4,272	
December	2,838	2,290	3,932	4,306	4,114	
January	3,466	2,724	4,638	4,957	4,670	
February	2,810	2,558	3,780	3,926	4,737	
March	2,831	2,600	4,732	4,189	5,145	
April	2,645	2,151	3,881	4,802	4,209	
May	1,815	1,947	3,472	3,377	3,524	
June	1,646	2,908	2,963	3,407	3,696	
	<b>29,405</b>	<b>27,063</b>	<b>46,319</b>	<b>47,888</b>	<b>48,789</b>	

Patronage numbers have been reasonably stable over the last three years with an average of just on 4,000 visitors per month.

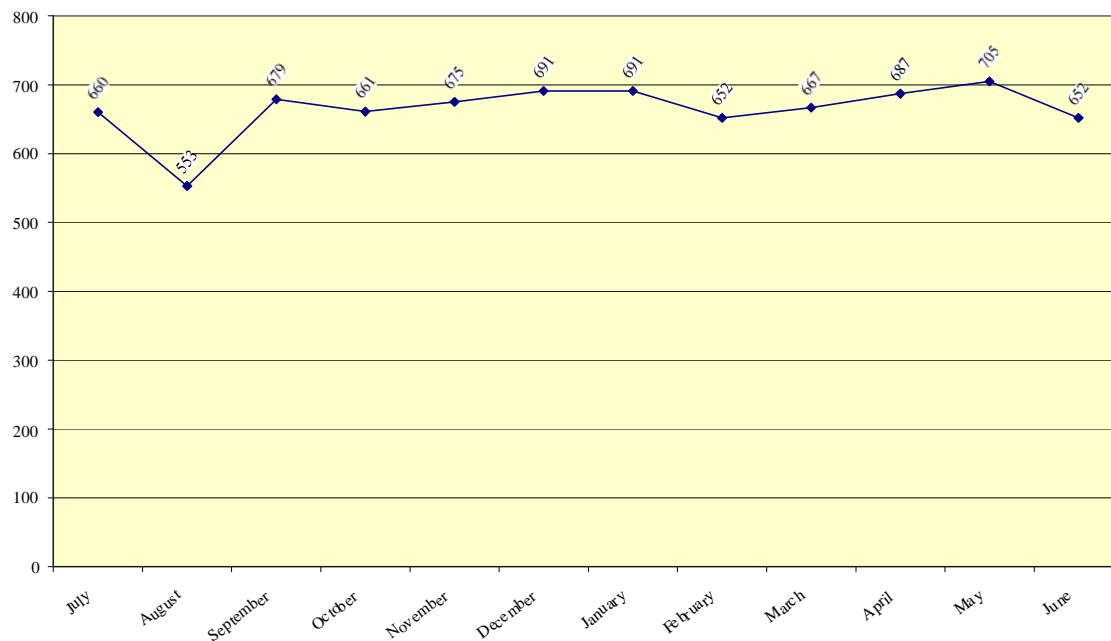
Percentage of overseas visitors into the centre ranges from 6-8% in the off-season up to 24% in February being the peak month for visitors.

#### OVERSEAS VISITOR NUMBERS - JULY 2004 TO JUNE 2005

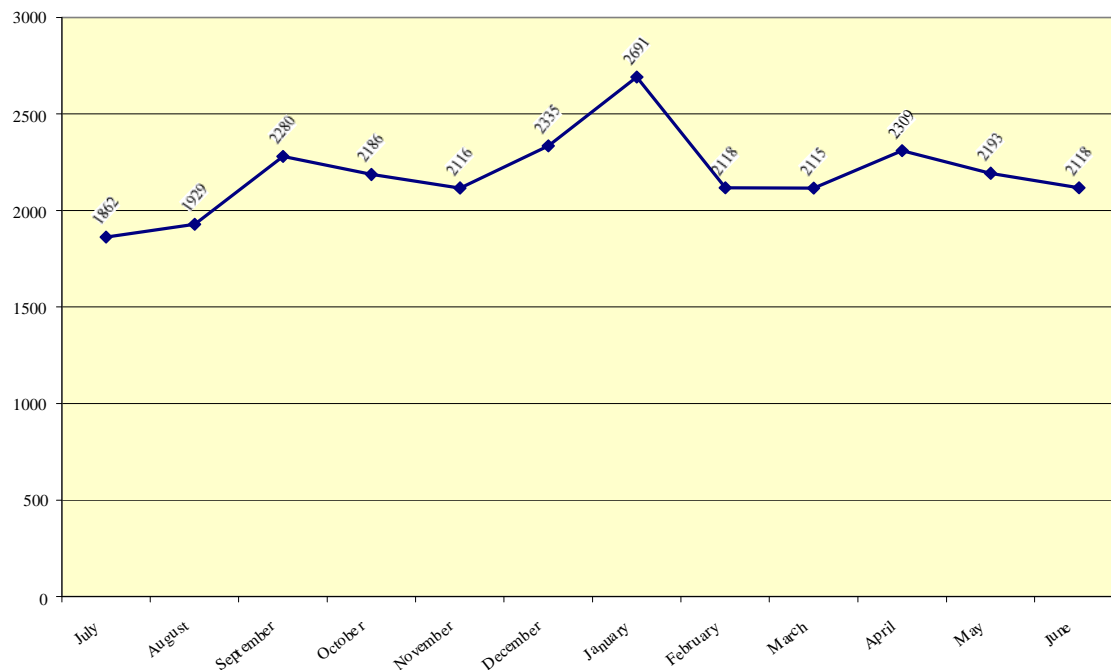


The AA Driver & Vehicle Licensing brings on average around 650 customers into the Centre and these numbers seem to have been stable the last two years. This figure could increase with the introduction of the Full Licence testing held here in Stratford since October 2005 and we have noticed an increase in numbers and revenue following the change.

**12 MONTHLY AA NUMBERS  
JULY 2004 - JUNE 2005**



**12 MONTHLY AA INCOME JULY 2004 TO JUNE 2005**



*Handwritten initials/signature*

### 3.3 Financial Summary

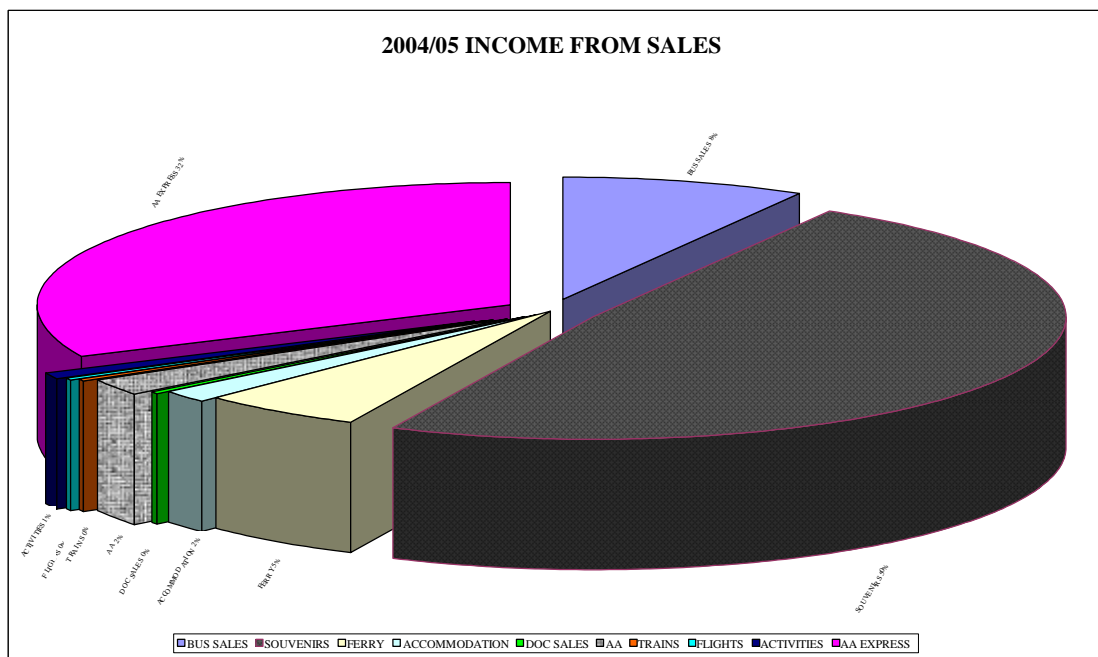
(a) **Asset and Valuation**

The Information Centre has no major assets, with office furniture the only asset utilised.

(b) **10 Year Financial Summary**

The current forecast is for a generally stable level of funding requirement. Fluctuations relate to brochure printing of the regional brochure every two years.

Internet bookings may have a small negative impact on travel bookings as the community gain more confidence in computer generated bookings/payments.



### 4. Maintenance and Operating

#### 4.1 Ownership

The building is owned by the Percy Thomson Trust and the Information Centre pays an annual rental for the space occupied.

#### 4.2 Estimated Costs over next 10 years

The estimated cost of operations and maintenance (including depreciation, and other overheads), for the next ten years and the actuals for the last four years remain stable.

### 5. Future Demand

#### 5.1 Future Demand Issues

(a) **Population**

Population growth in the district has remained reasonably consistent over the last 10 years. Statistics NZ predicts slight declines over the next decade and there are no indicators that signal any change in these trends for the future.

Stratford District Council has targeted the districts population to grow by 33% to 12,000. This desire is reflective of the outcomes from priorities from the LTCCP. There is no defining timeframe for this growth and strategies will be developed over the next 12-24 months to achieve this desire. No provisions have been made for population impacts on the Information Centre in budget forecasts, as none are expected.

## 6. Capital, Renewal Expenditure & Depreciation

There are no assets other than office furnishings.

## 7. Funding

### 7.1 10 Year Financial Plan

Councils Information Centre activity 10 year financial summary is detailed in the financial sections of the LTCCP.

The 10 Year Programme is based on maintaining a flat level of funding requirement with no further capital investment and minimal renewal and operations investment.

## 8. Conclusion

This activity plan is the first for the Information Centre. As such it will be improved as more asset information, planning and analysis are developed.