



Tourism groups unite to run environmentally friendly bus

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The environmentally friendly bus runs between Nelson and Kaiteriteri (pictured) or Mārahau, the entrance to the Abel Tasman National Park. Photo: Flickr user I Used A Nikon / CC BY-NC 2.0

Tourism operators have joined forces to establish a bus service between Nelson and the Abel Tasman National Park.

Better Bus general manager Zane Kennedy said there had long been a lack of transport between Nelson and Kaiteriteri or Mārahau - the entrances to the Abel Tasman.

Kennedy, who owned Wine, Art and Wilderness tour company, said while many operators ran their own shuttles, they realised there was an opportunity to reduce that carbon footprint through collaboration.

"The idea behind the service is to be able to combine that transport and have all the operators using just one vehicle [so] that we can operate a fleet that is flexible to the number of passengers on each given day."

Many tourism operators in Abel Tasman were already net zero or climate positive, Kennedy said.

"This now provides that link in the transport sector where you can really be providing a zero footprint [service] right from Nelson, pretty much from the airport, to the airport, from when you arrive to when you leave."

The bus service had run since November, servicing both Kaiteriteri and Mārahau, and had been so popular its capacity had to be doubled.



Some of those behind the Better Bus - Zane & Elissa Kennedy of Wine, Art and Wilderness, Wendy King of Wilsons Abel Tasman and Tracee Neilson of Nelson Regional Development Agency. Photo: NRDA

"The original idea behind the service was to operate one bus in from Nelson in the morning and one out from the Abel Tasman [in the] evening, but we're now looking at having to put services on in the opposite direction, at both ends of the day, due to the demand that we've had so far," Kennedy said.

People often made last minute bookings in the tourism industry, but the service already had advance bookings through January into February, he said.

The environmental impact created by the daily bus journeys was offset by Wine, Art and Wilderness which was a climate positive business, he said.

The service used existing vehicles owned by the various tourism operators, but the goal was to use hybrids, electric vehicles or possibly even hydrogen-powered vehicles in the future, Kennedy said.

Nelson Regional Development Agency visitor destination manager Tracee Neilson said the new service improved the region's connection with the Abel Tasman, reduced emissions and helped with the workforce shortage that was being experienced across the country.

"We're really excited because sustainability and focusing on the environment has been really important to us in recent years. We've recently had a look at how we promote the region and everything we do is about being good ancestors.

"Environmental stewardship is really at the heart of everything we do now, improving the long-term well-being of our region and its residents by always considering the environment is just vital."

The agency had created Aotearoa's first zero carbon itinerary - a four-day holiday through the Nelson Tasman region visiting wineries, food producers, and the Abel Tasman National Park.

The Better Bus service had grown by word of mouth and without any advertising in the first month, and Neilson said people were using it to get to their baches or visit friends.