



Expression of Interest

Tourism Operators

Wild Tamar Project

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Document Control

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About the Project

George Town Council has partnered with Visit North Tas, the State Government, and the Federal Government to create the Wild Tamar soft adventure campaign, aiming to launch in November 2021.

The Wild Tamar soft adventure campaign is predominantly a branding and marketing campaign aiming to develop new tourism offerings, increase regional visitation, and grow jobs and stability in the tourism sector in the North Tamar Valley region. The campaign is designed to provide support for existing and start-up tourism operators and businesses that can build on and take advantage of underutilised natural advantages that exist within the region. Ultimately, this allows existing or potential operators reluctant to invest capital the opportunity to test the market with minimal risk.

As the Administrator of the funding provided by State and Federal Governments, the George Town Council is seeking Expressions of Interest from start-up or existing businesses to develop new tourism offerings in the North Tamar Valley / Tamar River Mouth areas. Support is available to those operators requiring business start-up assistance, digital marketing, online merchant facilities, and infrastructure required to for site specific activation.

The under-utilised soft adventure opportunities the project aims to target are: -

- Boat tours that include or take advantage of the local fishing and seal colonies;
- Rock climbing and abseiling opportunities at the Hillwood Volcano rock climbing area;
- Kayaking, and other water sports like surfing, stand-up paddle boarding, and windsurfing;
- Diving, specifically departing from the eastern side of the Tamar River / kanamaluka.

Responses to the Expression of Interest will be assessed by a panel against the selection criteria. Respondents may also be required to be interviewed, and/or present to the assessment panel on their submission.

The Region

Starting only 15 minutes north Launceston and stretching to the northern coastline, the Tamar Valley region has something to offer everybody, from natural beauty, historic legends, and now modern adventure. Bounded in the east by some of Tasmania's earliest settlements of George Town and Low Head, and to the west by the riches of Beaconsfield, Beauty Point and Greens Beach. Its pristine waters extend out into the Bass Strait where seals, sharks, and whales make their home, and break across natural reefs of exotic delights and shores where penguins make their home.

The major settlement of the Tamar River mouth is George Town, and only a 40-min drive (50 km) north of Launceston and a major airport. A historic first settlement town is now a modern and thriving regional centre, with all the necessary services available to support a premium tourism destination.

Regional Highlights

Nature	
Low Head Penguin Tours (Low Head)	https://www.penguintourstasmania.com.au/
Seahorse World (Beauty Point)	https://seahorseworld.com.au/
Platypus House (Beauty Point)	https://platypushouse.com.au/
Kanamaluka Walking Trail (George Town) (Free self-guided)	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/kanamaluka-trail-george-town-and-low-head
Mount George Lookout and Nature Walk (George Town)	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/mt-george-scenic-look-out-and-historic-semaphore-george-town
Mount Direction Signal Station Short Walk (Mount Direction)	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/mt-direction-historic-semaphore-mt-direction
History	
Bass and Flinders Maritime Museum (George Town)	https://bassandflindersmuseum.com.au/
Watch House Gallery (George Town)	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/george-town-watch-house-george-town
Low Head Historic Site and Lighthouse (Low Head)	https://parks.tas.gov.au/explore-our-parks/low-head-historic-site
Pilot Station Maritime Museum and Accommodation (Low Head)	https://lowheadpilotstation.com.au/
The Grove Historic Home (George Town)	http://www.thegrovetas.com/
Beaconsfield Mine (Beaconsfield)	https://www.beaconsfieldheritage.com.au/
York Town historic site (York Town)	http://ontheconvicttrail.blogspot.com/2016/06/york-town-historic-site.html
Mount George Historic Semaphore	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/mt-george-scenic-look-out-and-historic-semaphore-george-town
Mount Direction Historic Semaphore	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/mt-direction-historic-semaphore-mt-direction
Sports and Adventure	
George Town Mountain Bike Trails	https://georgetown.tas.gov.au/george-town-mountain-bike-trail/
Four Wheel Driving	https://parks.tas.gov.au/things-to-do/four-wheel-driving-(4wd)/bridport-to-bellingham-4wd-traverse
Golf (Tam O'Shanter and George Town)	https://tamoshantergolfclub.com.au/ https://georgetowngolfclub.com.au/
Fine Dining and Eateries	
The Crazy Duck	https://www.yorkcove.com.au/dine
Don Mario's	https://www.facebook.com/DonMariosGeorgeTown/
Low Head Pilot Station Cafe	https://lowheadpilotstation.com.au/restaurant
The Pier Hotel	https://pierhotel.com.au/
Gray's Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/Grays-Hotel-144780438917199/
Many other eateries	https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Restaurants-g261652-George_Town_Tasmania.html

Invitation to Apply

George Town Council would like to invite existing and potential operators to submit an Expression of Interest to start commercial operations targeted to the under utilised soft-adventure offerings in the North Tamar Valley/Tamar River mouth areas.

The Opportunities

Seal and Boat Tours

Tenth Island is a 900-square-metre uninhabited granite islet and nature reserve, and part of the Waterhouse Island Group. The island is situated six kilometres from the Tasmania coastline, and accessible from the coastal towns of Low Head, George Town, Beechford, Lulworth and Weymouth. The island is home to a significant breeding colony of Australian fur seals with up to 400 pups born each year, as well as a breeding ground for black-faced cormorants, and a roost for little penguins. This in turn makes it a hunting ground for great white sharks. The Tenth Island Nature reserve is one of the largest (and few permanent) Seal Colonies in Australia. The island has always been a very popular spot for fishing and kayaking, but no formal tours currently exist.

Conversations with operators indicate that George Town offers excellent facilities for the launching of Seal Tours to the Tenth Island Nature reserve. Whilst kayakers are known to frequent the island, there are no known tours (powered or paddle). The island presents an excellent opportunity to offer a unique and incredibly accessible tourism venture for boat and seal tours.

Fishing Tours and Charters

The George Town region offers a variety of fantastic spots for beach, ocean, estuary and freshwater fishing, providing multiple options for commercial fishing tours and charters.

The Tamar River / kanamaluka has a large variety of fish species: flathead, bream, snapper, trevally, sharks, rays, salmon, whiting, mullet and many others. From a boat you can catch wrasse, barracouta, elephant fish, mackerel, mullet, garfish, King George whiting, longfin pike, snapper and gummy shark (outside the Shark Refuge Area). Of a night-time, the Pilot vessel beacon lights provide the perfect spot for jigging for arrow squid, calamari, and cuttlefish. Offshore during the warmer summer months, pursuing Mako shark provides excellent game fishing action.

Nearby Curries River Dam offers a freshwater alternative to sea/estuary fishing, and the dam is regularly stocked by the Inland Fisheries Service to maintain populations of both brown and rainbow trout. It may not be for every angler, as the catch rate is normally lower than other areas, but the fish are well fed, have bright orange flesh, and are of excellent eating quality. Curries River Dam has areas of both steep banks with deep drop offs, and reedy shallows making it suitable for bait fishing, lure and soft plastics, and fly fishing.

Kayaking and Other Water Sports

With options for river or ocean kayaking, the multitude of calm coves, and rocky headlands, makes the George Town region the perfect location to base kayak tour operations.

During the summer months, York Cove, Town Beach and East Beach offer waters calm enough for stand-up paddling boarding, whilst the windier days allow for kite and windsurfing.

Diving

George Town/York Cove host some of the best reef diving in Tasmania. Immediately off George Town divers can cruise through a giant kelp forest, check out colourful sponge gardens, and even visit a sunken tugboat wreck. Dive sites like The Avon and The Monument off the eastern shore of the Tamar River / Kanamaluka, Kelso off the western shore, and the Farewell Beacon off the river mouth, offer some of the best and most accessible diving in Northern Tasmania.

These dive sites are currently utilised by Dive Clubs and enthusiasts regularly, but there are no known commercial operators attached.

Rock Climbing and Abseiling

When it was open, the Hillwood Volcano was arguably the best sport climbing crag in Tasmania. There are over 150 routes of excellent quality, with unrivalled accessibility. The highly featured rock is a change from the vertical dolerite found elsewhere around northern Tasmania and the cliffs face all directions making it climbable most of the year. Unfortunately, the landowner restricted access after concerns about inappropriate behaviour by climbers and legal liability.

Council is negotiating a lease agreement with the landowner with plans to re-open the area to the rock-climbing community. Once activated, the Hillwood Volcano presents opportunities for rock-climbing and abseiling tour operators to take advantage of this local geographic spectacle.

The Hillwood Volcano is the only location in the country where such offerings can be made within 15-30 minutes of each other, making it incredibly viable for commercial rock climbing and abseiling operations.

Mountain Biking

The George Town Mountain Bike Trail Development is a Federally funded project aiming to compliment and complete the mountain biking narrative in north east Tasmania. The project encompasses two separate mountain bike trail networks: Mount George (opened in October 2021) offering 16kms of fun and feature packed trails, and; The Tippogoree Hills (still under construction with opening anticipated early 2022) offering longer descents and bigger vistas. With the proximity to Launceston and its airport, to other mountain biking options, and to a plethora of complimenting family activities, it's an easy option to include the George Town Mountain Bike Trails in the itinerary.

The opportunity exists for shuttle bus operators and mountain bike tour operators to take advantage of the George Town Mountain Bike Trails.

Support Offered

Businesses, both existing and new, participating in the Wild Tamar project will have the opportunity to receive support as part of the campaign. Several levels of support exist and are detailed on the following sections.

Wild Tamar Brand, Logo and Website

George Town Council has appointed Walker Designs as the agency developing the Wild Tamar brand, logo and website. Once completed, participating business will be listed on the dedicated the Wild Tamar website, and become synonymous with the brand. It is anticipated that the Wild Tamar brand, logo, and website will be ready to launch in early November 2021.

Digital Marketing Campaign

The Wild Tamar campaign will involve a comprehensive digital marketing campaign, aiming to: -

- To increase awareness of the Wild Tamar brand, the adventure activities on offer, and its operators to identified target audiences;
- To increase traffic to the Wild Tamar website and convert traffic to tour bookings/sales;
- To ensure the Wild Tamar website is easily found on Google search results by potential customers;
- To increase regional dispersal of visitors and increase length of stay in the area; and
- To stand out amongst competitors in the digital landscape with creative and attractive ads.

Businesses and operators partnering with the Wild Tamar project will automatically be included in the digital marketing campaign for the Wild Tamar brand and website. It is anticipated that the Wild Tamar digital marketing campaign will be launched in November 2021, noting that in the absence of attached commercial operators, the campaign will aim to market the activity.

Business Start-up Support

Businesses participating in the Wild Tamar campaign will have access to the support of the Entrepreneurship Facilitator program (an Australian Government initiative) delivered by The Van Diemen Project. The program offers free help to anyone wanting to start a business in Northern Tasmania, or have a concept and want to run it past someone to help work out the next steps.

Merchant Facilities

If needed, new operators will have access to an already established merchant facility to take and process bookings via a third-party web-based platform. This enables operators to load their tours onto the third-party website, which can then be linked and accessed from the Wild Tamar website.

Operators will get: -

- A 'tour detail page' to have photos, itinerary, and inclusions;
- A 'book now page' (checkout) where customers pay using the third-party merchant facility;
- An 'operator dashboard' which is the backend where operators can manage the loading of tours, availability and pricing and also see/manage bookings; and
- An automated bookings and enquiries email, which goes to a nominated email, and which links direct to the 'booking page' (like an Airbnb page) showing customer/booking details with the ability to send messages back and forth.

For any bookings processed on the platform, the operator will be paid the booking revenue (minus a 2% card fee) from a trust account at the end of the month in which the tour goes ahead.

Other Support

George Town Council understands that there may be additional support given by way site development, infrastructure installation and lease / land-use agreements. The Wild Tamar project has scope to do this in the interest of activating a site to facilitate commercial operations that correlates to the Wild Tamar concept.

Assessment Criteria

A single stage (rather than two stage) EOI process will apply to appoint operators. As such, please ensure that your application form responses clearly demonstrate your capacity to deliver to each of the requirements, including evidence and supporting documentation.

Applications will be assessed by an assessment panel with members from George Town Council and local tourism bodies, based on the following criteria:

1. Concept Proposal - 20% - Appropriateness of concept, infrastructure, and creativity.
2. Strategic Alignment - 15% - Consistency of the proposal with the vision and objectives with the Wild Tamar Project.
3. Business Management and Viability - 25% - Experience, credentials, and capability in managing a similar business and capacity to deliver the project.
4. Visitor Experience - 20% - The level of service, range of activities and contribution the proposal makes to the visitor experience.
6. Permit departures - 5% - Ability to meet any permit requirements.

Submissions

All existing and potential operators wishing to supply can do so by emailing the Expression of Interest Submission Form located at the end of this document to council@georgetown.tas.gov.au with "Wild Tamar EOI Submission" included as the subject line. A notification email will be sent to confirm receipt of the application. There is no official closing date, but the Wild Tamar brand, website and digital marketing campaign will be launched in November 2021, meaning applicants would benefit the most by aligning to the launch date.

Contact

Any questions received in relation to this Expression of Interest can be made to George Town Council by phone: 03 6382 8800 or email: council@georgetown.tas.gov.au.

Disclaimer

This EOI is intended to provide background information.

George Town Council does not give any warranty, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of any information contained in this EOI or which may be provided in association with it, or before the date of this EOI or in future by George Town Council, its officers or agents.

George Town Council does not take responsibility for any site impediments such as heritage status, permissible uses, encumbrances on title, native title claims and environmental, planning and other approvals.

George Town Council does not accept any responsibility to any applicant or third party under the law of contract, tort or otherwise for any loss or damage which may arise from anything contained in the

EOI, any matter deemed to form part of this EOI, the supporting information or documents referred to in this EOI or any information supplied on behalf of George Town Council.

All information given to applicants/proponents will be on an 'all care and no responsibility' basis.

Proponents acknowledge and agree that the submission of a proposal does not create a process contract.

By submitting an application, the applicant agrees, without qualifications, to have acknowledged and accepted this disclaimer.

Prospective applicants must not approach, or request any other person to approach any member of the Council's staff or a Councillor – individually or collectively to solicit support for their submission or otherwise seek to influence the outcome of the EOI process. Any such conduct will cause the applicant to be disqualified from consideration.

