

Visitor amenities areas

The Government is proposing to enable visitor amenities areas on conservation land to support investment in quality visitor experiences in high-use areas, while protecting the conservation values (including cultural values) of these places.

What are visitor amenities areas?

Visitor amenities areas are areas in conservation land that are suitable for the development and operation of visitor facilities and services appropriate for the public use and enjoyment of conservation land.

They are provided for the Conservation Amendment Bill and are inspired by the existing provisions to provide for 'amenities areas' in national parks through section 15 of the National Parks Act 1980.

Why changes are needed

▶ Growing pressure from visitors

- Visitor numbers to New Zealand have increased by over 350% since 1987 and are expected to keep rising. Around half of all international visitors access public conservation land each year.
- High numbers of visitors place pressure on the environment and existing facilities, which can affect people's enjoyment of these places.

▶ Limited ability to plan ahead

- There is currently no effective planning tool for managing tourism and growth on a range of types of public conservation land.
- This makes it harder to plan for where amenities are needed, when they are needed, and how big they should be, to support safe, enjoyable access for visitors.

What the changes are

The changes will allow:

- **Visitor amenities areas to be established on the following types of conservation land where certain criteria are met:** national parks, conservation parks, stewardship areas, recreation reserves, historic reserves, scenic reserves, government purpose reserves, and local purpose reserves.
- **More appropriate rules for visitor use:** The Minister will be able to apply rules in the area that are more enabling of tourism and recreation.
- **A planned, coordinated approach to development:** Visitor amenities areas will enable a spatial planning approach that guides the development of visitor facilities within that area.



What these changes will achieve

Protect the wider conservation area

- Development will be carefully focused in small, suitable locations, helping to protect surrounding conservation land while managing high visitor numbers.

Support recreation and tourism

- Facilities, services, and infrastructure will be planned to support current and future visitor growth, helping people enjoy conservation areas safely and responsibly.

Enable integrated, long-term planning and investment

- Visitor amenities area status will facilitate new or upgraded visitor experiences. The dedicated area plan chapter will provide certainty for investment in the high-quality infrastructure and services that visitors and local communities demand.

Give effect to Treaty obligations

- The approach ensures decisions are made in a way that reflects Treaty principles and is consistent with Treaty settlement commitments and other obligations.

Where visitor amenities areas can be developed

Visitor amenities areas will only be developed in locations where they make sense and where conservation values can be protected. The Minister must be satisfied that the following criteria are met before establishing a visitor amenities area:

- **High visitor use:** The location is already, or is predicted to be, an area of high visitor use.
- **Right place, minimum impact:** The location is where adverse effects are lowest and the area could not reasonably be located outside of conservation land.
- **Right size:** The amenities area must be an appropriate size for the facilities and services that are likely to be provided.
- **Protecting what matters:** Relevant conservation values will continue to be well-represented around the visitor amenities area.

How new visitor amenities areas will be created

The Bill will enable the Minister to create visitor amenities areas through a clear, step-by-step process that includes:

- **Early engagement with relevant iwi** prior to public notification (and the New Zealand Conservation Authority if the area is proposed for a national park).
- **Public notification and feedback:** The Minister will publicly notify the proposal and allow at least 40 working days for people to provide feedback.

Policies for the visitor amenities area will be consulted on through the same process and included as a chapter in the relevant area plan if the visitor amenities area is established.