Regional Profile | Coromandel Peninsula

The perfect business lifestyle

March 2012

Spotlight on Thames
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Overview

This is an exciting time for the Coromandel economy. The Peninsula’s natural attributes, strategic location and passionate, innovative people have created a diverse economy, ranked number 13 out of New Zealand’s 72 local authority areas on the Tress index scale (March 2011). This means the Coromandel economy is less vulnerable to adverse events such as climatic conditions and commodity price fluctuations compared to other territorial authorities in New Zealand.

Located in close proximity to the three main cities of Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga, as well as having easy access to and from Auckland International Airport, makes the Coromandel a prime destination to make the most of business and lifestyle opportunities. A new two-lane Kopu Bridge, progressed as part of the Government’s $500 million Jobs and Growth Plan makes it “much easier for freight and holiday makers to access the Coromandel Peninsula” (Kaye Clarke, NZTA State Highways Manager). With annual average daily traffic crossing the Kopu Bridge at 9,000 vehicles per day and rising to 1,100 vehicles per hour during peak holiday periods, the new Kopu Bridge means smooth travelling to and from the Peninsula.

It is predicted that traffic volumes on the bridge will increase by 2% per annum over the next 15 years. A Kopu to Thames Structure Plan provides a further 50 hectares of industrial zoning and additional 135 hectares for more than a thousand new dwellings. This caters for expected growth as a result of the newly constructed $47 million Kopu Bridge and growth for Thames, with the bridge improving access to and from business premises in the Kopu industrial area and giving faster travel times and fuel savings for business fleets and holiday travellers.
Our town centres in the Coromandel are poised to grow with care to preserve and promote the uniqueness of each. Whangamata underwent a $4.2 million town centre upgrade promoting its surfing history and world-class surf break and Whitianga is poised for a $4 million town centre upgrade. Mercury Bay has a brand new 10ha $5.2 million multi-sport facility featuring 220 car parks and five international sports fields. It is just the first stage of a bigger vision for a complex that will include a 200 person changing facility, grandstand, corporate boxes and seating for 900 people, an indoor sports facility featuring more courts, a weights gym, café, reception area and second level club rooms.
Statistics New Zealand estimates that around 700,000 visitor guest nights per year are spent in the Region. Over the extended summer period the population staying overnight on the Peninsula can increase to as much as 142,000 people. A calendar full of prominent events keeps visitors coming to the Peninsula and travelling through Thames. The local councils of Thames-Coromandel (TCDC) and Hauraki support the Regional Tourism Organisation (Destination Coromandel) in funding to continue to market the region as a tourist destination. Recently re-structured, Destination Coromandel has new energy and focus on getting more domestic and international visitors staying longer (among other goals). The team will launch the brand new Hauraki Rail Trail linking Paeroa to the Firth of Thames in May (2012). This joint project with TCDC, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Council’s adds another major attraction to a destination rich in natural beauty.

Wholesale and retail trade is the Coromandel’s largest contributing industry to District GDP, followed by business and property services and manufacturing. Combined, these industries contributed an estimated 40% to Coromandel’s economic output (year ending March 2011). Traditional industries of tourism, agriculture and farming continue to be mainstays in the economy.

The health services sector has averaged growth of 3.5% per annum over the last ten years, reflecting Thames as a main centre for provision of health care with the Thames Hospital, medical centres, retirement homes, and various practitioner and related services operating in the settlement and servicing the wider region.

The Coromandel is attracting fast-growing and dynamic IT firms, engineering and eco-innovation businesses. The business services sector has averaged growth of 5% per annum over the last ten years. The establishment of six new communication towers will bring faster broadband and increased cell phone coverage throughout the Coromandel where a hidden network of high net worth individuals already work with international companies and take advantage of the unsurpassed lifestyle and value for money premium real estate.

Aquaculture already provides a sizeable percentage of the District’s GDP and employment and the Council is committed to the industry’s continued sustainable development, working with industry to investigate new wharfing facilities among other initiatives. The Coromandel’s aquaculture and seafood processing sector grew 30.7% in the year ending March 2011, much faster than the national rate.

The Coromandel mussel industry is worth about $46 million a year (2007 figures) and approval was recently granted for an expansion into another 520 hectares in the Firth – which should see a doubling of mussel production over time. Our Coromandel oyster industry generates about 19% of New Zealand’s Pacific oysters which are worth about $6 million to the Coromandel. Together these two species bring in over $50 million to the Coromandel and create about 400 industry-related jobs.

Thames-Coromandel District Council has invested heavily in infrastructure including $83 million wastewater treatment plants on the eastern Coromandel and Thames, to cater for growth and peak population while protecting our natural resources. The Council continues to invest not only in infrastructure, but in planning that provides insights for smooth negotiation and support processes through the planning and consent stages.
**Sector Breakdown**

**By Value Added to District's GDP**
- Business Services: 24%
- Retail and Distribution: 29%
- Manufacturing and Building: 26%
- Other: 21%

**By Number of Business Units**
- Business Services: 19%
- Retail and Distribution: 27%
- Manufacturing and Building: 20%
- Other: 23%

**By Employment**
- Retail and Distribution: 27%
- Manufacturing and Building: 27%
- Social Services: 32%
- Other: 14%
Thames is the gateway to all of the Coromandel’s unique towns and is the chosen base for exciting new IT and engineering businesses that have experienced growth of 600 per cent in their first year and are looking to expand further.

Residents and visitors to the Coromandel enjoy a range of activity options and Thames is a central location from which many can accessed, such as boat ramps, walking and tramping tracks, DOC campgrounds, airfield (there are also airfields at Pauanui and Whitianga), and a range of community facilities including a local swimming pool, skate park, playground, sports fields, gym, cycle path, library, and museum. Being a major shopping and business centre, Thames is a hub for services and retail and offers plenty in the way of cafés and restaurants.

Thames is not simply recognised as the main shopping centre for the whole peninsula (acting as the service centre for the Coromandel) but it is also the primary retail destination for its neighbouring district, Hauraki. It therefore has a ‘shopper’s catchment radius’ that extends way beyond its residential boundaries.

Thames is ideally located, being just over an hour’s drive from central Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. It is a thoroughfare for traffic travelling north up the peninsula to Coromandel or over to Mercury Bay, and being only a five minute drive from the Kopu Bridge and Kopu-Hikuai turn-off is also frequented by shoppers with destinations on the south-eastern side of the peninsula (i.e. Tairua, Pauanui and Whangamata) as well as attracting shoppers from South of Kopu and from the Hauraki side of the Kopu Bridge. The new two-lane Kopu Bridge has enabled easier access to the District including to Thames.
## Thames Potential Shopper’s Catchment Radius

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thames -Coromandel District Usual Residents (estimate, 2011)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coromandel-Colville Ward</td>
<td>2,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury Bay Ward</td>
<td>7,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames Ward</td>
<td>10,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Eastern Ward (Pauanui, Tairua, Whangamata)</td>
<td>6,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total District</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hauraki District Usual Residents (estimate, 2011)</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plains Ward</td>
<td>6,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paeroa Ward</td>
<td>5,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waihi Ward</td>
<td>6,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total District</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,750</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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| Estimated summer peak population (2009/2010) | 120,000 |

| Potential permanent residents footprint | 45,750 |
| Potential peak season footprint        | 147,000 |

* Resident figures based on Statistics New Zealand population estimates as at March 2011.
Looking to the future

The Thames Coromandel District Council has underlined its commitment to supporting economic development within the region and has highlighted it as a major focus in the 2012-2022 Ten Year Plan.

A few relevant TCDC development projects for the Thames community highlighted in the proposed 2012-2022 Ten Year Plan include:

- Thames Library building update
- New Skatepark for Thames
- Hauraki Rail Trail signs and linkages
- Multisport indoor sports facility
- Rhodes Park cark park seal
- Replacement swimming pool contribution

The Council has dedicated economic development staff helping to drive initiatives and support existing and potential new investors.

We welcome any enquiries regarding business development within the region and are keen to discuss how we can actively support your business. Please do get in touch!

Benjamin Day  *MPhil, BAv, MNZIM*

**Economic Development and Communications Manager**

**Thames-Coromandel District Council**

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