

# WEST COAST WHITEBAIT FESTIVAL 2011

## EMAIL SURVEY RESULTS - NOVEMBER 2011

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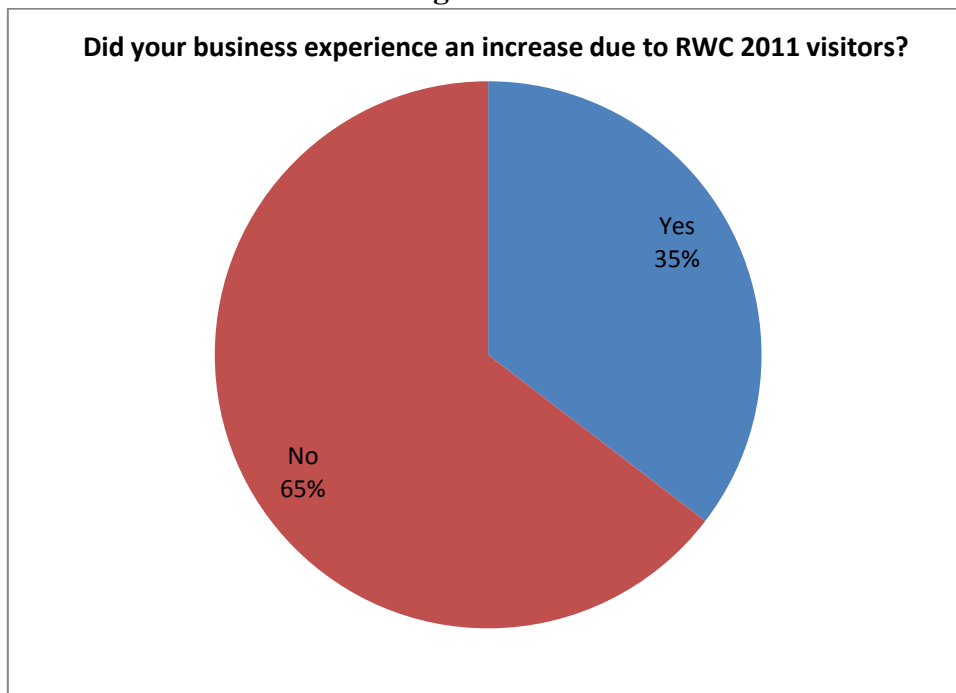
### Introduction

This document reports on results from an email survey sent out to the Tourism West Coast database during November 2011. Data from the survey has been used to gauge the impact of RWC 2011 on tourism businesses on the Coast, awareness of West Coast Whitebait Festival 2011 activities by local businesses and the level of support for a Coast-wide Whitebait Festival to be held annually. There were 48 respondents to the survey. The results should be interpreted as a general guide to impacts of RWC 2011 and the West Coast Whitebait Festival rather than a statistically significant analysis of the data.

### Impact of RWC 2011 on West Coast Tourism Businesses

When asked if West Coast tourism business had experienced an increase in activity due to RWC 2011, approximately one third of respondents reported that they did experience an increase in business while approximately two thirds indicated they had not experienced any increase in business (see Figure One below).

**Figure One:**



When further prompted about the amount of any increases in business from RWC 2011 compared with September/October 2010 the responses were as follows:

Of the 35% who reported an increase in business as a result of RWC 2011, the average increase in business activity from September/October 2010 was 19.5%.

Of the 65% who reported no increase in business as a result of RWC 2011, two respondents provided the following comments:

*“In fact I lost \$50 by 2 Canadians taking off without paying!”*

*“Lots of RWC Visitors coming through but overall numbers were down both months (while they were up in July/Aug) from previous years”.*

The second comment indicating that there were more visitors in the region as a result of RWC 2011 but overall visitor numbers were down is revealing. Even though the West Coast did not host any teams or matches as part of RWC 2011, the region did host many visitors as a direct result of RWC 2011 (actual visitor numbers and guest nights will be known when the Commercial Accommodation Monitor for Sept/Oct 2011 is released).

However, as a result of both the lingering global recession and the Christchurch earthquakes, overall numbers of visitors to the West Coast were still down. For those West Coast businesses that did experience an increase in business as a direct result of RWC 2011 it is likely that they were more focused on servicing the international visitor market and that they made specific efforts to capitalise on RWC 2011 as part of their marketing efforts during 2010 and 2011.

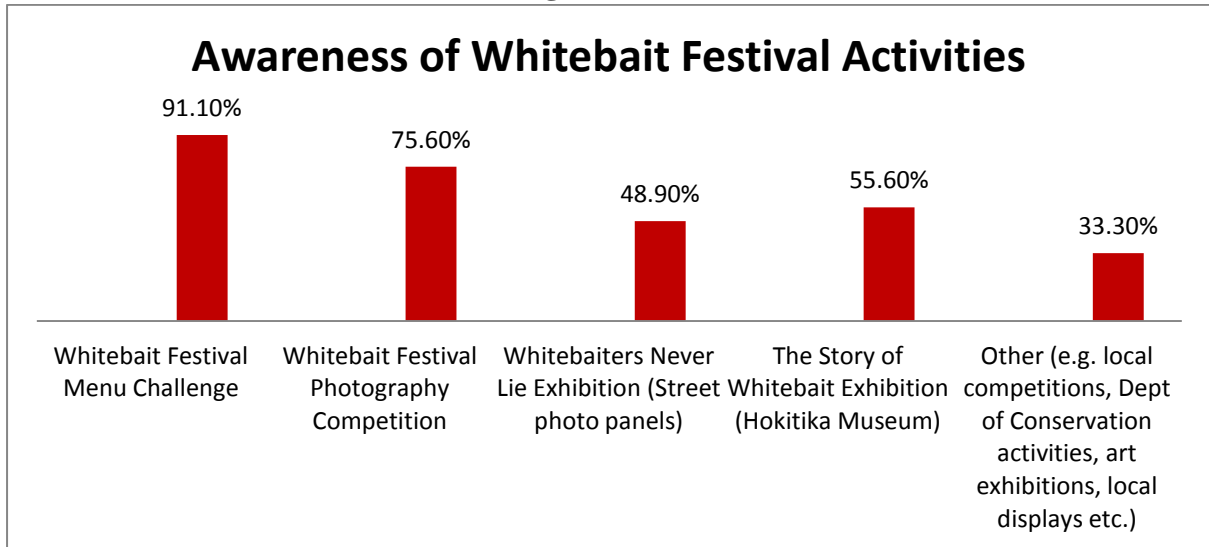
### **Awareness of West Coast Whitebait Festival Activities**

Awareness amongst respondents to activities that were part of the inaugural West Coast Whitebait Festival was high. When asked which West Coast Whitebait Festival activities local businesses were most aware of during RWC 2011/REAL New Zealand Festival 2011 there were some clear distinctions.

Awareness was by far the greatest for the Whitebait Festival Menu Challenge (91.1%) followed by the Whitebait Festival Photography competition. Moderate awareness was evident for The Story of Whitebait Exhibition at Hokitika Museum (55.6%) and the Whitebaiters Never Lie Photo Panel exhibition (48.9%). Lower awareness was reported for other activities such as Dept of Conservation events, art exhibitions and local displays (see Figure Two, over page).

These results suggest that those activities that were officially aligned with the West Coast Whitebait Festival 2011 were most successful in generating awareness amongst tourism businesses located on the West Coast.

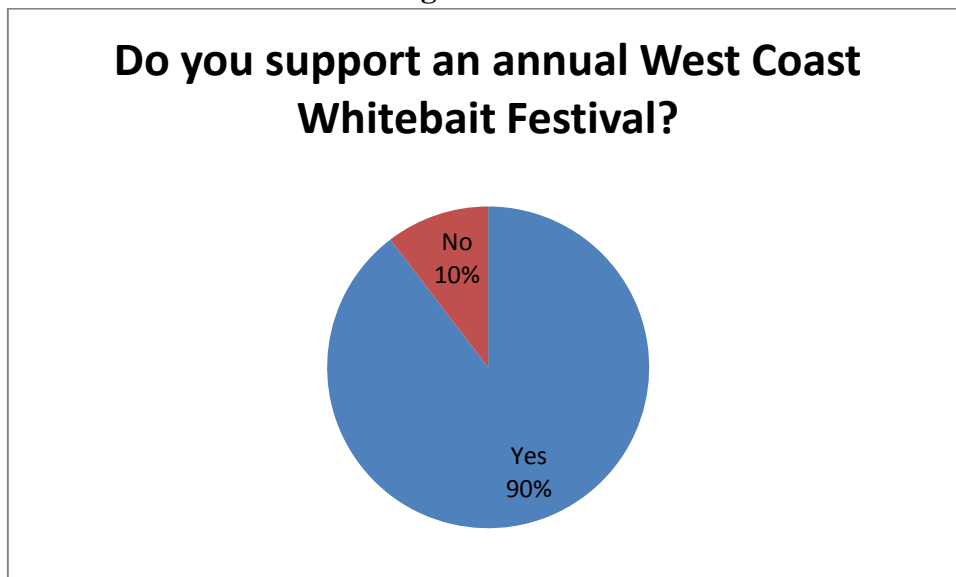
Figure Two:



### Support for West Coast Whitebait Festival

There was very strong support for an annual West Coast Whitebait Festival that is Coast-wide and coincides with the whitebait season (see Figure Three, below).

Figure Three:



Additional comments provided by respondents shed further light upon support for an annual West Coast Whitebait Festival. Of those supporting the Festival, the following selection of comments were typical:

- *“Whitebaiters Never Lie photos were a lively addition to the Greymouth floodwall. Agree that they need replacing asap”.*

- *“Hokitika Gallery exhibition is very well done and I recommended visiting it to all of our South-travelling guests.”*
- *“I think that “West Coast Whitebait” is a bloody good brand....should have an annual “WHITEBAIT festival”.*
- *“Have really enjoyed & very grateful for the support from TWC. Would love to make it an annual event. Fresh whitebait on the menu- is whitebait at its best”*
- *“THOUGHT THE WHITEBAIT FESTIVAL MENU CHALLENGE AND THE STREET PANELS WERE EXCELLENT.”*
- *“Is it possible to continue this annually?”*
- *“Street photo panels were great. Would like to have one ourselves. Great idea to make it an annual event. Well done.”*
- *“Have had great feedback from the Exhibition - was really well done - would like to see this as a travelling exhibition perhaps - i.e. different place on the coast each year?”*
- *“Great”.*

Of those less supportive of the West Coast Whitebait Festival, or those with suggestions for improvements, the following selection of comments were typical:

- *“The texting for the best whitebait might not have worked as well as having guests go to a website. Many of my guests did not have access to texting but used the web.”*
- *“Feel that due to the Christchurch earthquake and the rugby games not being played there it really affected tourism for us and we did not see the numbers we would have if games had been played there.”*
- *“As we are inland I think the whitebait festival is of no consequence to us.”*
- *“Time the next whitebait festival to run the same weekend as the street races!”*

## **Summary**

Overall the email survey results for the West Coast Whitebait Festival provide useful information about the impacts of RWC 2011 in the West Coast region and the levels of awareness and support for an annual West Coast Whitebait Festival.

The lack of games and hosted teams on the Coast as part of RWC 2011, coupled with the impacts of the ongoing global recession and the Christchurch earthquakes reduced the potential for much greater levels of business activities. While there were increased numbers of visitors in the region as a result of RWC 2011, the overall numbers, length of stay and spending levels were likely to have been less for the West Coast than for regions that did not experience these challenges.

The inaugural West Coast Whitebait Festival generated considerable awareness amongst local tourism businesses, especially those events that were officially part of the Festival activities. There is very strong support for the Festival to be held annually, Coast-wide and to

coincide with the whitebait season. These results provide strong support for Tourism West Coast to continue to organise and deliver an annual West Coast Whitebait Festival.