

# West Coast Conservation Training and Employment Hub

The Westport-based Conservation Training and Employment Hub was officially opened at the end of March, the aim is to bring together West Coast employers, learners, mana whenua, local government and the vocational training sector to address local environmental needs and support the regional economy.

Buller District Council and Tai Poutini Polytechnic are partnering to establish the Hub, which is the first stage in what will become a multi-layered approach to the support of a green economy in the Buller District and the wider West Coast.

The Hub will provide accessible training, employment and education opportunities for those working in, working with and interested in conservation and biodiversity.



Tai Poutini Polytechnic's Peter O'Sullivan, responsible for initially coordinating and managing the Hub, shares how the regional initiative is rolling out.

## What is the Conservation Training and Employment Hub?

This is an exciting initiative which has seen regional leaders come together to create an innovative approach to an environmental and employment opportunity on the West Coast – the growing need for conservation and sustainability expertise to address key local issues and exploit growth opportunities.

More than just a physical location for learning, the Hub concept is about bringing together all the key players – like the Polytechnic, local Council, employers, conservation experts, NZTA and other Government agencies – to create a multi-layered approach that identifies projects to support and works to address key emerging issues such as climate change.

## What training will be delivered through the hub?

The beauty of this approach is that it is flexible and can respond to local needs. Right now, we're working with the local community, conservation employers and others to understand what these needs are: What are the key projects underway that need skilled workers? What are the regional environmental issues that require support? What is the future of conservation and sustainability and what expertise will be required down the track?

These are all questions that we're asking now and we want to learn more. The concept of the hub will evolve and shaped depending on the needs of our region.

## What courses are you currently delivering?

We're working with key community stakeholders to identify exactly what training is needed. We are about to begin training with ZIP, along with opportunities to learn about vehicle and machinery operation, height access, river ranger skills, navigation and more. The qualifications available vary on the training required.

## What types of training are you thinking about delivering in the future?

This will directly reflect the needs of industry, employers and key regional projects. It will align to goals identified in regional growth strategies such as the Buller District Council's Environmental Improvement and Prosperity Strategy, Te Whanaketanga Te Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Development Strategy 2050, and the West Coast Regional Workforce Plan. Beyond that, we'll work with the community and employers to understand their goals and what skills their people need for success.

## What sort of people will likely enrol in the training?

Training through the Hub will be varied and targeted at different levels. It is for all types of learners and will cater to

the needs of industry and of the learners themselves. We're working with local schools and support agencies to identify potential learners, and we'll also offer in-work training so people can upskill while on the job. There will also be options for volunteers to upskill and special projects will be targeted where key local skills are needed.

## Where will the training take place?

We have a physical location at Tai Poutini Polytechnic's Westport campus, however it is envisaged that much of the training will be delivered on-the-ground at sites and locations all across the West Coast.

## Who is delivering the training?

The majority of our training is currently being delivered by Te Pūkenga; as Tai Poutini Polytechnic is now a subsidiary of Te Pūkenga, we have much greater access to resources and opportunities for partnerships and innovation to make initiatives like the Hub happen. Being part of Te Pūkenga means we are more connected to the other organisations delivering vocational and applied education in Aotearoa New Zealand and we will work with them to share skills and knowledge to better help our learners and employers succeed.

At times the Conservation Training and Employment Hub may engage with specialist trainers or other providers outside Te Pūkenga to deliver training. The aim is that we're flexible and able to seize opportunities to deliver the training that the local community needs.

## How is the training delivered?

Training will be delivered through a mix of online, on-campus and on-job learning to give learners more flexibility in what, where and how they learn.

## What is the benefit of doing training through the Conservation Training and Employment Hub?

Because we're designing the Hub alongside the local community, we know the training will meet local employment and project needs. By working locally you'll get support throughout your study, access to our campus facilities (such as computers, printers and other support) and the guidance of our tutors.

## When is this all going to start happening?

It's happening now and will grow in the future: we're taking the training and programmes already being delivered on the West Coast and expanding and targeting them to local needs. By the middle of the year our aim is to offer at least three micro-credentials (qualifications that indicate a specific skills has been mastered) through the Hub. By the end of the year we will have supported launching a flagship project and identified a process for future opportunity and training identification.