

Work progressing on re-opening an information centre in Ashburton

22 December 2018 - ADC - Plans to re-open the former i-SITE building in Ashburton as an information centre have been progressing in recent months, with the Ashburton District Council and the newly established independent group, Ashburton Info Hub (AIH) working together to bring the concept to life.

While AIH had hoped to have the centre operational before the end of 2018, this task has proved more complex than was initially anticipated, but both organisations are keen to see a workable solution reached as soon as possible in the New Year.

David West, speaking on behalf of AIH, says it's disappointing that the centre has been unable to be opened in the preferred timeframe, however several important steps have been taken and positive progress made.

"There is currently more than one concept on the table and it is hoped that we will be able to reach a solution that benefits tourism in and around Ashburton next year," he says. "Both parties recognise the desire in the community to have an information centre available in Ashburton, albeit with a different and more viable operational model, and we are doing our best to see this happen."

AIH, a charitable trust set up by local businessmen; David West, Tony Todd and Paul Mullan; accountant, Brendan Adam; and lawyer, Leandra Fitzgibbon, was established following the closure of the i-SITE Information Centre on East Street, Ashburton in October 2017. The objective of the group is to provide a sustainable information centre for visitors to Ashburton.

Representatives of AIH presented an outline of their concept to the Council's Finance & Business Support committee on 18 October. After the meeting, Council Chief Executive Hamish Riach convened a special meeting between AIH, the Council tourism agency, Experience Mid Canterbury, and Council staff to discuss the concept and how it could best proceed. The major outcome from that meeting was that AIH and EMC agreed to work on the detail of how the two could complement each other in the marketplace.

"We were pleased with the progress made at that initial meeting," said Mr Riach, "and the genuine desire to continue developing a model where the services of EMC and AIH would complement and add value to each other. It was most encouraging to see the commitment to on-going discussions."

"While the work EMC does is primarily focused on attracting visitors from around New Zealand and internationally, the two services certainly have complementary elements that should be considered," EMC board Chair,

James Urquhart says.

In the last month, representatives of AIH and the EMC board have met and further explored options that are hoped to meet the objectives of EMC, AIH, the Council and the community.