**Cycle trails**

The Provincial Growth Fund will provide up to $1 million towards two Great Rides on the South Island’s West Coast.

Funding will go to the West Coast Wilderness Trail and the Old Ghost Road, both part of Nga Haerenga, the New Zealand Cycle Trail and increasingly important to the local tourism industry.

“Currently running from Greymouth to Hokitika, the West Coast Wilderness Trail is already delivering economic benefits to the region – a recent survey suggested the trail brings around 10,000 new visitors to the West Coast each year,” Mr Jones says.

“The Government will provide Westland District Council with up to $500,000 to complete the final section, from Hokitika to Ross. This will increase the attractiveness of the trail to visitors, encouraging them to stay longer and spend time in small communities like Ruatapu and Ross.

“The Old Ghost Road, between Lyell and the Mokihinui River in Buller, is building an international reputation as a world-class backcountry trail. However, its popularity means facilities along the trail are under pressure.

“The Fund will make up to $500,000 available to the Mokihinui-Lyell Backcountry Trust so the trail can continue to grow visitor numbers by expanding accommodation capacity and improving facilities.”

Funding for the Old Ghost Road trail is contingent on a satisfactory business case.

“This is a positive step for West Coast tourism and I’m excited these trails can move forward with the help of the Provincial Growth Fund.

**Waste-to-energy plant**

The Provincial Growth Fund will provide $350,000 to assess the feasibility of establishing a waste-to-energy plant in the Buller District near Westport.

The waste-to-energy facility could substantially reduce the amount of waste going to landfills in the South Island by as much as 350,000 tonnes, or 50 per cent per year.

“The proposed waste-to-energy facility could be a key driver for economic development on the West Coast, with numerous environmental and commercial spinoffs for industries throughout the region,” says Mr Jones.

“The facility would also provide energy for new industries on the West Coast, such as a proposed 40 hectare hydroponic glasshouse horticulture operation that would be powered by the energy, hot water and CO2 from the waste-to-energy plant.

“The project will contribute to a number of outcomes including mitigating and adapting to climate change.

“The Buller District and the West Coast region would benefit from 50 new jobs at the waste-to-energy plant, with a further 240 jobs estimated to be created by the glasshouse operation.

“Government agencies will continue to work with the West Coast this project to understand the implications on the environment and economy of the Coast” Mr Jones says.

**Punakaiki Master Plan**

The Provincial Growth Fund will invest $100,000 to help Punakaiki develop a master plan.

“The West Coast of the South Island is a major tourist destination and the icon of Punakaiki is a valuable visitor attraction but the district is facing major challenges because of that tourism growth,” Mr Jones says.

“The township already attracts around 450,000 visitors per year and these numbers can only increase when the Paparoa Track and Pike29 Memorial Track open in 2019.

“Future-proofing Punakaiki is already a priority action in the West Coast’s Economic Development Action Plan, released last year. It is now apparent, however, that the Punakaiki area faces complex issues beyond the scope of the action plan initiative.

“There is a need for a long-term strategy that addresses Punakaiki’s infrastructure needs and secures its status as a premier attraction.

“Getting a master plan for Punakaiki will ensure there are options for solving some of its infrastructure issues, enhancing visitor facilities and growing the economic opportunities that exist in the district,” says Mr Jones.

Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage has welcomed the investment in Punakaiki.

“The famous Pancake Rocks and Blowholes at Punakaiki are a major drawcard for visitors as are the dramatic karst landscapes in the Punakaiki and Pororari Valleys. Of course people want to come see these special spaces but there’s been a failure to plan for increased demand and we need better infrastructure.

“One aspect of future proofing will be to look at how our special wildlife is protected. For instance Westland petrels are disorientated by the lights of Punakaiki and land near lights in places where they are unable to take flight again. Finding solutions that help all of the locals – be that human, or animal, is a priority for this Government,” Ms Sage says.