

# Visitor numbers on the rise

## Overnight guest figures are up 15.7 per cent on same period last year

By Regan Schoultz

More visitors are heading to Wanganui, giving the local economy and the accommodation sector a substantial boost.

Guest nights for February were up 15.7 per cent from February 2014, according to Statistics New Zealand's latest accommodation survey.

That translates to a rise from

16,403 guest nights to 18,986, while visitor arrival numbers have also increased 16.3 per cent, jumping from 9410 in 2014 to 10,948 in 2015.

The survey records the num-

ber of guests staying in hotels, motels, backpacker accommodation and holiday parks each month. Each guest night is equivalent to one guest spending one night at an establishment.

Wanganui Regional Museum director Eric Dorfman said a change in approach towards tourism had helped boost the accommodation sector and bring more people.

"We are beginning to see the

■ Continued p3



# Guest numbers up across the board

■ Continued from p1

results of a focus that began about four years ago,” Dr Dorfman said.

“At that time, we in the tourism industry in Wanganui were facing a number of challenges, including a lack of recognition internationally and nationally and a poorly coordinated industry.

“Our approach has been to know our visitors well so as to ensure our efforts are targeted most effectively.”

Dr Dorfman said the Wanga-

nui tourism industry was very “healthy” and continuing to grow.

“At the regional museum, we have been observing a steady increase in national and international visitors. February’s accommodation data is consistent with ours

— Wanganui visitor numbers have been trending up for quite a while.”

New Zealand-wide, national



Eric Dorfman

guest nights were up 5.4 per cent in February this year compared with the same month in 2014, marking the 11th consecutive month of rises.

Guest nights were up for all four accommodation types in February 2015, and Tourism New Zea-

land chief executive Kevin Bowler said a growing market of international visitors and the worldwide popularity of the

*Hobbit* films had contributed to a boost in the accommodation sector.

“You can see in the data that the international guest nights are the fast-growing area. They are up 8.6 per cent and what we are seeing is an increase in arrivals from a lot of different markets.”

“Arrival growth right through summer has been very strong... The emergence of a stronger middle class in developing nations like China and India and then the halo effect of the *Hobbit* films have also had an impact.”