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Tourism gold mine tipped Exploration will 'help realise South-West wilderness potential'

By SEAN FORD

MINING in the South- West Conservation Area will open up the wilderness to tourists and may lead to eco-resorts there, tourism guru Mike Fry believes.

"Any new mining venture in the South-West will inevitably kick-start a new wave of tourism investment," the Destination Strahan chairman said.

Mr Fry is excited by the prospects for tourism as mining companies continue exploration in the inaccessible South-West.

If a mine starts, big tourism potential will finally be realised there, he says.

"It's probably one of the last frontiers in Tasmania.

"It has a beautiful coastline, there's heaps of wildlife onshore and inland, seal colonies and the recreational fishing, there's nothing to compare.

"It's an area that is untouched.

"A lot of people would love a three or four-day hike in that area.

"Because we have that stretch of water (Macquarie Harbour) and no facilities over there, it's something that's only being tackled by very experienced walkers.

"I'm talking initially bushwalking and four- wheel drive tours," he said, adding eco-resorts were likely to follow.

Mr Fry is taking his idea to Tourism Tasmania, the Cradle Coast Authority and the West Coast Council.

He said it may follow Tarkine tourism as the industry's next big thing.

"It's probably something for the next generation at| Strahan.

"It's probably the catalyst to bring more entrepreneurs in."

Mr Fry said miners would need a big ferry to take heavy equipment to the area, south of Macquarie Harbour.

He said that could be combined with a car and passenger ferry service and bushwalking and four-wheel drive tours, infrastructure and up to three resorts would follow.

Between them, mining and tourism should also provide enough impetus to convince the Federal Government to upgrade the Strahan Airport to take bigger planes, he said.

He said tourism and mining were permitted uses in the conservation area.

"It's called the South- West Conservation Area, not the World Heritage Area, which is why mining is allowed."

He said he was sure any mining approvals would be subject to conditions ensuring damage to habitats was minimised and sensitive areas protected.

"The Green movement may look on all this activity with a degree of suspicion, but given the environmental conditions on mining companies, I would think everyone would be keeping their eye on



STRONG FUTURE: Destination Strahan chairman Mike Fry is excited by the prospects for tourism as mining companies explore the South-West. Picture: Stuart Wilson.

it."

The Advocate

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