

Decision ends the battle of the Bowl

By RYAN EVANS - Taranaki Daily News

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The battle over access to the Bowl of Brooklands is over with "option three" confirmed and out for tender.

The confirmation finally spells the end of an eight-week controversy over the best way to improve road access into the Bowl of Brooklands.

Former Pukekura Park curator George Fuller said the outcome was a great relief.

"I think everybody's a winner," Mr Fuller said.

"The integrity of the native trees in that area has been recognised and protected.

"It's just the principle of looking after the precious native vegetation in that area.

"For a city it's quite unique to have that diversity and quality of native trees within the city limits.

"You can't buy that sort of experience for people, it's unique to that precious little area."

The controversy was sparked when the New Plymouth District Council approved plans to put in a new road from the racecourse into the Bowl to improve access for entertainment crews and emergency vehicles.

The plan would have required the removal of 25 mature trees and was greeted with howls of outrage from the Friends of Pukekura Park, focused especially on the impact of the road on a 400-year-old puriri tree, which critics claimed would be endangered if the road went ahead.

After weeks of protest action including a petition and tree-side vigils led by Mr Fuller, "option three" was put forward by engineers John Matthews, John Kuindersma and Colin Bell as an alternative to the council's first choice.

It involves strengthening and widening the existing road and building a new retaining wall.

The council agreed to investigate it to see if it was a viable option.

Council parks manager Mark Bruhn said that with a few design changes, it was.

"We've worked through the design and it's been agreed to by both groups and it's out for tender as we speak.

"We're very pleased to be driving forward on it."

Several changes have been made to the design following the investigation's finding, including lengthening the retaining wall, but the whole project was still estimated to come in within the council's \$250,000 budget limit, he said.

He said the total estimated cost wouldn't be revealed until the tender process was complete and the contract awarded.

Tenders close on Friday.

Mr Matthews, one of the architects of the compromise option, said the outcome was a credit to all parties involved.

"I was confident when I first got involved we could find a solution that would accommodate everybody's desires and that's played out so it's great."

New Plymouth Mayor Peter Tennent said the outcome of the debate was another classic example of Taranaki people working together.

"The puriri tree was always the first priority for us," he said.

"The advice we had from arborists was that it [the first option] was the best way to protect it.

"This way is no worse off at the very least and more importantly it has the support of people who weren't supportive at the start.

"Full marks to all involved," Mr Tennent said.



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