



PROTECT IT: Councillor Mike Merrick wants to see the Honeyfield fountain, on New Plymouth's coastal walkway, restored before it's too late. Photo: MARK TAYLOR

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Merrick urges restoration of fountain on coastal walkway

By KIM WOODHAM

A NEW PLYMOUTH District councillor is launching a campaign to restore the neglected Honeyfield fountain on the coastal walkway.

"I'm not going to let it go," Mike Merrick said.

"Some of us councillors are going to start up a group called Friends Of The Fountain to source funding or skills."

Mr Merrick described the 97-year-old fountain's state as appalling, an embarrassment and disgusting.

"Since the walkway has been finished, it has opened up that area and thousands of people go past it. It's not good enough to leave it in that condition."

The project made it on to a list considered by councillors at a budget meeting this week, but with a price tag of \$50,000 was considered too expensive.

The marble, sandstone and wrought iron fountain on Regina Pl was gifted

to the city in 1907 by Alice Brown Honeyfield, whose family was a dedicated supporter of community projects.

In 1995, the council spent \$6400 on the fountain but never reactivated it because it was deemed impractical and a health risk.

Now it is suffering from salt damage, algae and rust. Much of the ironwork needs replacing.

Many residents are backing Mr Merrick.

Alec Gibbs, who lives on Dawson St, only metres from the fountain, wrote to the council 10 years ago asking it to do something with the fountain.

"The council said they'd think about it and after 10 years they're still thinking about it!" he said this week.

He did not believe the \$50,000 restoration figure council officers had arrived at.

"You could get enthusiasts to probably do it up for next to nothing," he said.

A woman, who only wanted to be

known as Gay, said it did not make sense that the council forked out huge amounts of money on some projects but balked at spending \$50,000 on one of New Plymouth's treasures.

"It was a gift so they should look after it."

Bex Douds (20) grew up in the area and never realised the monument was built as a water fountain. It made sense to get it back in working condition since so many people used the walkway, she said.

"I've always wondered what it was. It's quite cool. They (the council) spend money on much more useless things," she said.

Council community assets general manager Anthony Wilson told councillors the council budgeted for general maintenance of approved public memorials but specific capital funding was required for major renovation work.

The \$50,000 quote made allowances for matching stone to be imported from overseas.