

Residents angry bridge work plan rejected

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TIKORANGI residents are incensed they are not being supported in a bid to save the historic Bertrand Rd bridge.

A plan involving residents voluntarily doing all the repairs to the bridge has been put to both the North Taranaki District and Clifton County councils, as the bridge is on their boundary.

The work would have cost about \$70,000 — to be split between the two councils. Residents' spokesman Bob Mahy said with all voluntary labour the job would be the equivalent of what could have cost \$250,000.

The North Taranaki District Council passed a resolution in June stating no action could be taken and the matter should be reconsidered when the New Plymouth District Council is formed.

District engineer John Sutton said this was because no provision had been made in the 1989/90 estimates for the project.

The Clifton County Council decided it would consider funding its share if the district council agreed.

"If the district council is prepared to put something towards it the council would consider it favourably," said acting county manager Diane Dallas.

Mr Sutton said attempts were being made to organise a meeting between the two councils and residents.

Mr Mahy said he believed the councils were giving up an exceptionally good deal.

Residents were prepared to do the work if the councils pay for the materials and employ an overseer to guide the work.

He said residents felt very strongly about the closure, which forced many to travel extra distance.

By GEORGINA GILES

Some have even considered starting fundraising to save the 96-year-old bridge.

"We are certainly disappointed . . . we didn't think we were asking a lot," Mr Mahy said.

Up to when the bridge was closed on August 28, 1985, 100 vehicles were using it every day.

Mr Mahy said the closure had isolated two districts. "Contact between neighbouring schools, sports clubs, and even families and friends has either ceased or been severely curtailed."

Many people feel that every effort should be made to preserve the bridge for its historic, architectural and engineering significance, particularly as it is in such an exceptional setting.

"We believe this type of bridge is becoming increasingly rare and to allow it to deteriorate to the point where it becomes unsafe and has to be demolished would be a very great pity indeed."

Mr Mahy said he frequently met people who asked when the bridge would reopen. Many inquiries came from people out of the district.

Mr Mahy said the \$70,000 repair job would allow the bridge to be reopened to light traffic, but further work would be needed in about five years.

The proposal to the councils follows campaigns which began even before the closure. Residents fought against the decision, then when the bridge was closed, organised a petition which attracted 430 signatures, and held a public meeting which 230 people attended.

