

New greens for NP golf range

By NEIL RITCHIE

GOLF professional Paul Scimone says he has bounced back from the Borrell Ave driving range debacle and is keen to open up again in a different part of New Plymouth.

His first priority is to sell the Borrell Ave land and then transfer the golf bays, netting and other equipment to the new site.

He said his second priority was to continue repaying his creditors.

However, he would not confirm he was planning to relocate the golf range on land behind the Quality Hotel in Bell Block — as was suggested by New Plymouth District Council solicitor Susan Hughes at a Planning Tribunal hearing earlier this week.

"We are looking at relocating to elsewhere in New Plymouth . . . we hope to be able to sell Borrell Ave soon and set up again shortly afterwards," he said.

"I believe we have re-established

credibility with local people. I have been to South Korea twice since Borrell Ave was closed down, sourcing additional funds . . . technically we are insolvent but we are maintaining our debt servicing," said Mr Scimone in New Plymouth.

The tribunal issued an interim order in August closing the range, principally because of golf balls escaping on to the premises of neighbouring businesses. The range has remained closed since.

Mr Scimone said plans for a nine-hole, par-three course had now been deferred until the range had been relocated and principle debtors repaid.

"It will be great for people with an hour's lunchtime, they will be able to take a few irons and a putter with them, and practise their short game," he said.

He also intends bringing in groups of tourists, mainly from Asia, to Taranaki to sample the

region's golf courses and other tourist attractions.

"I believe Taranaki has some of the best (value) golf courses in New Zealand, they are cheaper and more accessible than anywhere else in the country."

One such group was due to arrive in December and stay for at least two months. Up to 10 aspiring South Korean golfers, aged 16-22, are scheduled to come for an intensive time of golf tuition.

Another group — of about 20 people from a United States army base in Seoul — was scheduled to arrive in Taranaki in mid-January.

"This was part of my business plan all along, bringing in Asians who are mad keen on golf . . . if the (New Plymouth) airport runway extension takes place it would make more sense to me to bring tourists into New Plymouth, let them experience the region, and then they can go on to Auckland or Rotorua."



PAUL SCIMONE:
Bounced back.