

Cycleway groups get into gear

By LYN HUMPHREYS
lyn.humphreys@tnl.co.nz

TARANAKI interest groups are bunched up and pedalling hard to ensure the region gets a fair share of the multi-million-dollar national cycleways budget.

More than \$50m has been set aside by Prime Minister John Key to develop a recession-busting series of cycleways throughout the country.

Last month, the Ministry of Tourism approved seven quick start projects – but none were in Taranaki.

A range of Taranaki agencies have now formed a group to explore how the region might benefit from the scheme.

The group includes representatives of Venture Taranaki, the four councils, Sport Taranaki, cycling advocates, the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Transport Agency.

The Taranaki cycleways group had already started work on identifying possible projects that might qualify for funding and will work on proposals over the next few months, Taranaki Regional Council's operations director Rob Phillips said.

"A total of \$9m has already been allocated to the seven projects already approved, so there is still \$41m in the pot," Mr Phillips said. Factors which led to the quick start approvals would now be closely analysed by the local group, he said.

Those factors include:

- Social and economic impact, particularly the creation of new jobs in areas where they're needed.
- The ability to draw on existing tourism traffic and use existing tourism infrastructure.
- Whether the finished cycleway will be suitable for general users or only for experienced off-road riders.
- Whether the trail users will be required to stay more than a day.
- Whether the trail can be built on existing infrastructure, such as a stop bank or railway embankment, or a little-used flat country road.
- Whether there are any engineering or legal obstacles.

Ruling unconv

Ombudsman forces council to reveal list

THE public's right to know about possible land contamination will come at a price to thousands of landowners in the wake of a landmark ruling by the Ombudsmen's Office.

The ruling, which will see the location of thousands of potentially contaminated sites made public, will affect land values, according to both the Real Estate Institute and Local Government New Zealand.

The Hawke's Bay Regional Council

has been forced to reveal the locations of 3099 potentially contaminated sites, after the Ombudsmen ruled public safety was more important than the potential effects on property prices.

The ruling was made in response to a complaint by Fairfax Media after the council refused to make public a list of the sites under an Official Information Act request because it believed it could affect property prices.

Environment Minister Nick Smith

Weighting move may aid local contractors

By RICHARD WOODD
richard.woodd@tnl.co.nz

THE difficulty of favouring local providers without also penalising the ratepayers with ramped-up prices was resolved by the South Taranaki District Council yesterday setting a cut-off at \$100,000.

For goods, works or services from \$10,000 up to an estimated value of \$100,000, preference will be given to local businesses, the policy development committee decided.

South Taranaki building contractors have been losing major council contracts to outsiders coming in with low prices.

The council in June was unable to agree on a percentage weighting favouring local contractors, but decided that "an environment of opportunity" should be created and that was on the table yesterday.

A "local business" has to be a ratepayer, employ local staff and have a physical presence in the district.

The council will consider splitting large contracts into smaller components to increase local tender opportunities.

All tenderers will be required to

identify the use of local sub-contractors and suppliers.

Where the difference between the tender prices from a local business and a non-local business is marginal, the local will be given consideration.

Chief executive Craig Stevenson will decide what is marginal.

"Anything contentious I consult the mayor about anyway," Mr Stevenson said.

Councillor Alex Ballantyne commented: "If there were any rorts we'd soon hear about them."

The upper limit was raised from \$50,000 to \$100,000 at the urging of councillor Kirsty Bourke, strongly supported by Simon Rangiwahia who said: "You can't buy much for \$50,000 these days. Even a house bedroom can cost well over that."

The sole dissenter was Ian Wards who said the council should "keep its nose right out of it and let market forces decide the outcome. The effect of this policy is we will accept a degree of ratepayer subsidy for local contractors and let the chief executive decide what and when. By removing the competitive element how will we ever know if the cost to the ratepayer has increased as a result?"