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P Griffith

Date: 3 February 2011
TO: Tasman District Council via Engineering Services Committee
FROM: Penny Griffith
SUBJECT: **Replacing Salisbury Swing Bridge, Aorere River**

My submission asks Tasman District Council (TDC) to replace the Salisbury Swing Bridge over the Aorere River near Bainham with a modern construction.

Background:

The historic (Category 2) Salisbury Bridge, which reopened in 2004 after restoration, was destroyed on 28 December 2010 when it was hit by a tree in the raging floodwaters.

Originally constructed in 1886 after years of lobbying for safe access to the Quartz Range goldfields, the bridge was subsequently badly damaged in a flood in late January 1899. That flood (112 years ago) seems to have been of similar severity to the 28 December 2010 flood, with the Aorere recorded as rising 30-40 feet in the gorge at Salisbury Bridge (2010 flood estimate: a rise of 15 metres).

The 1899 damage presumably contributed to the need to rebuild the bridge in 1902, as the NZ Historic Places Trust letter of 12 January 2011 notes (TDC Council papers for meeting of 20 January 2011). In 1985 it again became the only means of access when the new road bridge was washed away.

In September 2009 I was pleased to discover the 1902 specifications for the bridge at Archives New Zealand, Wellington, and sent a copy to TDC.

Salisbury Bridge is recorded in a major international database of bridges (www.bridgemeister.com) and in Geoffrey Thornton's *Bridging The Gap*, which further records that it was repaired in 1945. The bridge even features as part of the action in New Zealand author Maurice Gee's children's novel *The Halfmen of O*, a text studied in schools.

Rationale for Rebuilding Salisbury Bridge:

Salisbury Swing Bridge is regarded with great fondness and respect by the Golden Bay community as a symbol of early history and settler tenacity, and by visitors and locals as somewhere to fully appreciate the gorge in that part of the Aorere River -- a place of landscape beauty and drama. No one forgets having been on the swing bridge, and the experience and view from the adjacent Quartz Range Road bridge simply doesn't have the same impact.

If the bridge is not rebuilt it seems most unlikely that visitors would drive so far up the valley simply to read an information panel. I believe that would have a flow-on effect in

a reduction in visitor numbers at Bainham Store. There is a synergy between the upper Aorere valley areas of Kaituna, Bainham and Salisbury Bridge.

It was with great relief that the community saw Salisbury Bridge restored as a historic bridge in 2004 after a period when its future had seemed threatened. Now yet again the life of the bridge, which has regularly gone 'through the wars' since 1886, is in doubt.

However, it seems realistic to consider a way forward with a modern replacement swing bridge that could provide the same experience for visitors and the community. A modern replacement would also have the advantage of being simpler (cheaper) for the council to maintain compared with providing for the expensive and complex challenges of a heritage construction. A new bridge would become yet another chapter in the long story of access across this gorge.

I think this is a real opportunity for the Engineering Services Committee and Tasman District Council as a whole to acknowledge that Salisbury Bridge makes a significant contribution to appreciating a site of outstanding landscape value. It would also signal council's sensitivity to the pakeha heritage of this part of its rohe, a heritage that developed from New Zealand's first payable goldrush.

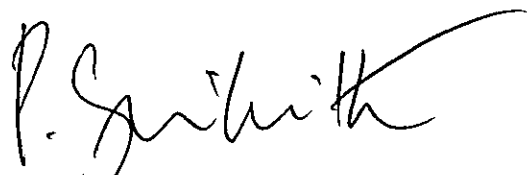
Conclusion:

The loss of Salisbury Swing Bridge has shocked and saddened the Golden Bay community and those who had previously experienced it as visitors. A repeated message from all sorts of people is that they can't believe that nothing is being done to replace the bridge.

Replacing the 1902 historic bridge with a modern construction is both a tourism and a heritage commemoration opportunity. The carpark and tourism signage from further down the valley are already there. All we need is the new bridge, please.

SUBMISSION:

I ask the Engineering Services Committee to endorse this submission to Tasman District Council to proceed with planning to rebuild the Salisbury Swing Bridge over the Aorere River near Bainham, and to forward the proposal to Council for approval.



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