

Tuesday May 31, 2005

## **Media Release**

### **Vehicle Ban Proposed to Preserve Old Bridge for Walkers and Cyclists**

It's been part of the Fernside landscape for well over half a century.

Now the Waimakariri District Council is moving to ensure the old wooden bridge that crosses the Cust River remains available for public use.

Bridge Road Bridge is 24 metres long and lies at the southeast end of Bridge Road, (an unsealed road) adjacent to O'Roarkes Road.

Records detailing its construction no longer exist, but it's believed to have been built anywhere from 50 to 70 years ago – as a shortcut for the horses and drays and light trucks hauling goods in the area.

Council Roading Manager, George JasonSmith, says the problem is the bridge was never intended to carry heavy loads like modern day trucks.

“The Australian hardwoods used to build the bridge have gradually deteriorated with age and consequently have lost some of their early strength.”

The bridge is already subject to severe load restrictions and he says it's now impractical to keep it open for modern vehicular traffic.

George JasonSmith says people who live in the area say they wouldn't object to a ban on vehicles on the bridge but would like to see it retained for pedestrian and cycle traffic.

The Council is now asking the wider community what they think.

George JasonSmith wants to reinforce that there is “no intention to close the bridge to all traffic”.

The Council recognises its value to the community as part of the walking and cycling network, and is proposing only that vehicles be prevented from using it in the future.

A vehicle ban, he says, would also help preserve the structure for future generations to enjoy.

“While it would be simply unaffordable to maintain the Bridge Road Bridge for vehicles, the upkeep to maintain it as a pedestrian and cycling facility will be relatively negligible”.

A nearby track with a ford crossing could also be provided for equestrian use.

The Council is keen to hear what the wider community thinks of the proposed vehicle ban. Please forward your comments to the Waimakariri District Council, Private Bag 1005, Rangiora, attention George JasonSmith.

**For further information contact:  
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