



Wednesday, 02 Jul 2008

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Gully gravel gap looms

By JON HOYLE - The Dominion Post | Wednesday, 02 July 2008

Failure to ensure adequate local supplies of gravel and rock could lead to the cost of the \$1 billion-plus Transmission Gully roading project blowing out significantly, quarry lobbyists say.

The Aggregate and Quarry Association wants local and central governments to address the soaring costs of processing and carting the gravels and rock needed for building and road construction.

Vice-president Jason Lowe said Wellington's three main quarries could meet demand now but would be hard pressed to supply the "very hungry" proposed 27-kilometre Gully highway project north of Wellington, as well as other local construction projects, if more quarries were not established.

Without new quarries, the materials would need to be trucked in from further afield at a significantly higher economic and environmental cost.

The association says it takes about 10 years to navigate the resource consent process and get a quarry operating.

"I suggest [Wellington] is not far off its capacity to supply demand, so it needs to be thought out now before we get to the stage where we're ready to go but hang on, where are we going to get the aggregate for the concrete," Mr Lowe said.

The association says more quarries need to be set up closer to construction sites, to reduce transport costs, if the costs to consumers and taxpayers are to be sustainable.

President James Boyce said the cost of carting material doubled with every 30 kilometres of distance - a calculation made before the recent oil price spikes.

Mr Boyce said transport costs had become a critical concern for quarry operators in the past six to eight weeks.

More quarries closer to work sites would also reduce the carbon footprint of construction, he said.

He doubted the rising price of fuel and reduced use of motor vehicles would significantly affect demand, as public transport, including new rail lines, would still require rock products.

The association wants local and central governments' agreement to work toward a national strategy for the development of aggregate supplies with direct ministerial oversight.

Local governments could help the identification and designation of resources in their districts.

Resistance by residents near designated quarries is expected but the association believes this can be overcome through education and minimising the impact.

One roading contractor who asked not to be named said councils' approaches to administering the Resource

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ROBERT KITCHIN/Dominion Post

GREAT DEMAND: Aggregates and Quarry Association president James Boyce and vice-president Jason Lowe say a failure to ensure adequate local supplies of gravel and rock could lead to the cost of the \$1 billion-plus Transmission Gully roading project blowing out significantly.

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Management Act varied widely and inter-council tensions could sometimes delay the start of quarries and major roading projects.

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The association recommends that the Government consider changes to the RMA and the Local Government Act to make councils include aggregate resources in long-term plans.

Mr Lowe said a significant number of potential sites had already been rendered unuseable by urban development.

The association says aggregates are key strategic raw materials for the country's economic growth and resources need to be secured.

Since 1991, the production of aggregates has risen from 14 million tonnes a year to an expected 50 million tonnes for 2008, far ahead of earlier estimates.

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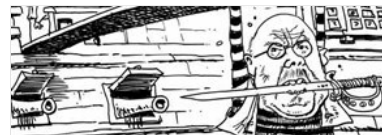
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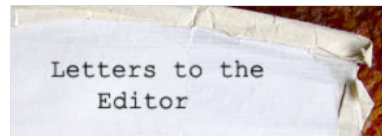
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