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Helen Street footbridge

Byron Council will consider progressing the Helen Street footbridge proposal at its February 28 meeting.

In 2005 Council made the decision to build the bridge and allocated a budget of \$175,000 funded from loans.

Council's original consultant Phillip Wallace Consulting Engineers estimated the total cost of the project to be from \$191,400 to \$245,300. A review by bridge engineers Cardno Alexander Browne has costed six options between \$336,000 and \$542,000. This range only covers construction of the bridge structure.

Councillors will wrestle with Council's procedures in estimating capital works projects.

Council staff have estimated that an additional \$100,000 is required for consultant fees, geotechnical investigation, landscaping, signage and approach footpath works.

To date \$10,000 has been spent on development application fees and consultant costs.

Council staff have recommended that councillors proceed with the cheapest option which has a total cost of \$446,000. (\$336,000 bridge, \$100,000 ancillary and \$10,000 already spent). Maintenance costs for the life of the bridge have been estimated at \$65,000 taking the overall project cost to \$511,000.

In addition to its original budget of \$175,000 Council has identified developer contributions

of \$139,000 which originate from a subdivision in Palmer Avenue, North Ocean Shores. This will leave a shortfall of \$132,000 which Council staff has recommended be funded from loan funds.

The option recommended by Council staff is for a bridge with three spans, steel trusses and timber decking. The costliest option has five spans, steel trusses and concrete decking. It has a total project cost of \$668,000.

The Helen Street footbridge has had a colourful life. Residents living close to the proposed bridge initially opposed the project but last year adopted a pragmatic attitude.

Early proponents sought Council's commitment to 50% of the cost as they believed they had a State Government commitment for the other 50%. That commitment evaporated.

In addition Council has now employed two consultants with outcomes that are entirely different. The review by Cardno Alexander Browne suggests that the design work done by Phillip Wallace needs substantial change.

If councillors adopt the Cardno Alexander Browne option it will need to apply to amend the DA consent to reflect the amended construction plans because the current consent is based on the Phillip Wallace design.

Is this a bridge too far?

**March edition "on the streets"
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