

Trestle gets \$250,000 from TC trail group

By Lexi Bainas, The Cowichan Valley Citizen
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Supporters of the Kinsol Trestle got a big boost Monday, Nov. 9 as the Trans Canada Trail organization stepped up with \$250,000.

Jack Peake, Chair of the Cowichan Foundation's Kinsol Capital Campaign, said, after hearing the announcement that the funds are coming from "a very, very important source, folks that are very keen to get this project done."

Valerie Pringle, chair of the Trans Canada Trail board of directors, agreed with his estimation.

"We are delighted to be able to contribute to this very ambitious project," she said.

"The restored Kinsol Trestle will be one of the jewels of the Trans Canada Trail network. Through our provincial partner, Trails BC, we will be watching with interest through the construction stage and look forward to celebrating the grand opening in 2011."

And his group is more than delighted to receive this timely boost, Peake said.

"This is brand-new money. We received \$1.88 million from the feds and \$1.88 million from the provincial government. We had to match that with \$1.88 million of other funds. We had a million from the Island Coastal Economic Trust and money from Western Forest Products and the labour unions in kind and now this cash money is bringing us really close to our \$1.88. We only need a few more hundred thousand. Of course, all of this (fundraising) is also with the idea that we want to raise as much as we can so we can also leave a legacy reserve fund for future maintenance and upkeep," he said.

Asked if the Kinsol Capital Campaign thought it had a mountain to climb when it first looked at the idea of finding \$1.88 million, Peake agreed.

"Yes, but the mountain has become much smaller. People from all walks of life are helping. Even the little donations that are coming in -- they now add up to \$15,000-\$20,000 -- are coming in from all over the world as well as (from within Canada.) Just the other day we had a donation from England. These small donations of \$50 and \$100 all add up."

The donation leaves approximately \$650,000 to be raised by the Cowichan Foundation for the rehabilitation project.

The Trans Canada Trail group is really enthusiastic because they can see the tourism potential of including the famous trestle, he said.

"They want to talk about this as one of the stars of the Trans Canada Trail when they talk to the rest of the world. They want to make it one of those very key sites that show up on their national advertising."

The iconic structure will combine with other components to make an attractive package. "The Trans Canada Trail would then be complete right out to Lake Cowichan and then back out again on what's Island Corridor Foundation right-of-way, along the old CPR/E&N line. We have a wonderful combination of things going on here," Peake said.

Engineered drawings are in preparation now, and soon requests can be sent out for management proposals and contract proposals.

The work should actually begin early in the spring of 2010 and finish by the spring of 2011.

"The completion date of spring of 2011 is key because the money is tied to that. The project has to be completed by that time in order to receive those funds."

So, if you're thinking of making a donation, sooner is better than later?

"It's very key. The federal and provincial funds do have an end time as to when they require these projects to be complete. It also gives us a very clear destination to shoot for and if you don't have these very clear timelines, things don't always move as quickly as you want them to do," Peake said.

Next month, there should be one more special fundraising event, he said.

"We don't have it all detailed out yet but we're hoping for it and that would bring us extremely close to all the dollars we're looking for," Peake said.

"Completion of the Trans Canada Trail will be a fantastic achievement for this country and we're thrilled the Kinsol Trestle will be a notable part of that trail network. The Vancouver Island portion of the trail will be 200 kilometres of some of the most dramatic scenery in the world -- and the Kinsol Trestle is one of the major attractions along the route," he said.

Designed by engineers but built by local farmers and loggers starting in 1911, the Kinsol Trestle is one of the largest and most spectacular timber rail trestle structures in the world.

At 614 feet in length and standing 145 feet above the salmon-bearing Koksilah River, the Kinsol is an incredible structure worth preserving for its heritage value as well as for the economic benefits the rehabilitation project will generate, proponents say.

Donations to the Kinsol Trestle rehabilitation project can be made on-line at www.kinsol.ca or by contacting Diane Myrden or Kim Martin at the campaign office at 250- 709-1087 or info@cfcowichan.ca