

Foundation boosts Kinsol Trestle

Judith Lavoie, Times Colonist
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Hikers and bikers are a quarter of a million dollars closer to being able to use the Kinsol Trestle instead of taking a 10-kilometre detour.

The Trans Canada Trail has donated \$250,000 to the Cowichan Foundation's Kinsol Capital Campaign, leaving \$650,000 to be raised to restore and maintain the historic trestle over the Koksilah River.

"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," said Jack Peake, chairman of the Kinsol campaign. The completed trestle will be the link between Lake Cowichan and the north end of Shawnigan Lake.

The total cost of restoring the rickety railway trestle, built between 1911 and 1920, will be \$6 million. The aim is to have the work completed by early summer 2011.

The 188-metre-long, 45-metre-high trestle, believed to be the tallest free-standing wood structure in the Commonwealth, fell into disrepair after the last train crossed it 30 years ago.

The province acquired the Canadian National Railway right-of-way in 1984 but, without maintenance, timbers rotted and a fire damaged many of the supporting structures.

In 2005, debate started on whether to demolish the trestle, replace it with a cheaper version or rebuild the original. After a community campaign to save it, fundraising started in earnest.

Most of the cost is being picked up by the provincial and federal governments and the Island Coastal Economic Trust.