

Nelson still in strong position in three-way tie for college

Nelson remains a strong contender as a site for the proposed United World College, which has just secured dairy giant Fonterra as a major sponsor, NZ UWC trust chairman Tony Baldwin says.

The backing brings the project closer to the \$850,000 needed before proceeding to the next feasibility stage, with \$600,000 raised so far, Mr Baldwin said.

Air New Zealand, Contact Energy and NZ Post were already confirmed as corporate sponsors.

It was announced in June that two sites in the Nelson region were on a list that had been narrowed to six throughout the country for the proposed college.

Mr Baldwin said yesterday that two sites had since been dropped, meaning Nelson was "definitely in the mix", but a site in the Bay of Islands had now been included.

It was now likely to be a three-way contest among Nelson, Queenstown and the Bay of Islands to host the planned \$74 million New Zealand college in a global network of 13 United World Colleges.

The project has received strong support from the Nelson and Tasman councils and has been endorsed by Nelson MP Nick Smith and Tertiary Education Minister Maryan Street, who is also a list MP and Nelson's Labour candidate.

The New Zealand college and campus would educate and house up to 250 scholarship students from around the world. It would employ 85 staff and have annual running costs of about \$7 million.

United World Colleges runs a demanding two-year academic programme ending with the International Baccalaureate exam. Students are selected on personal merit, irrespective of race, religion, politics and ability to pay.

Mr Baldwin, a law, public policy and strategy consultant who lives in the Nelson region, said recently that the Nelson City Council had shown the strongest support of any local authority and was keen to support the project in a practical way.

Offers of land had been made in Keri Keri and in Queenstown, which were attractive propositions, but requirements for the proposed college were wider than that, Mr Baldwin said.

He said that while the Bay of Islands offered a potentially deeper funding base and a wider multicultural community, it did not offer the diversity of outdoor opportunities the South Island areas did.

Mr Baldwin said the choice of site, which needed to be finalised by December this year, was critical to achieving the vision and benefits of a UWC in New Zealand. It had to be an international representation of New Zealand and needed to reflect the natural and community elements that made up the country.

CAPTION:

Tony Baldwin, Nelson "in the mix"