

## **Two Nelson sites on shortlist for college**

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Two sites in Nelson are on a list narrowed to six throughout the country for the proposed United World College, project director John Hilhorst has confirmed.

He said a site in Nelson and one in Tasman district were on the list, but declined to say whether that meant Nelson was high in the running.

"There are now six sites on the list, and two are in Nelson. That in itself is promising," Mr Hilhorst said.

It was announced last month that the region was being eyed as a possible location for the planned \$74 million New Zealand college in a global network of 13 United World Colleges, of which former South African president Nelson Mandela is honorary international president.

Mr Hilhorst said that in reaching this stage, 39 of a possible 45 sites in a small selection of regions throughout the country had been evaluated.

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 and Nelson Labour candidate Maryan Street.

Ms Street said the development raised exciting possibilities for the region, because the aims of UWC around the world were laudable.

"I'm happy to lend whatever support I can as an MP. I'm also aware that my colleague (Tertiary Education Minister) Pete Hodgson has written to NZ UWC trust patron Jim Bolger offering support and encouragement," she said.

Dr Smith said that as well as generating jobs and wealth creation in the region, a UWC in Nelson would make the region a focus of new thinking in direction and leadership internationally.

"I'm optimistic we might be able to pull this off, but in the end it has to stack up financially, and this is going to be a big challenge for its proponents," he said.

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.

NZ UWC trust chairman Tony Baldwin said yesterday the four other sites on the list were in Taupo, Queenstown and Rotorua.

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

He said selection of a site 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.

Mr Baldwin said it also needed to emphasise the New Zealand "brand", in order to attract the input of philanthropists from around the world.

Mr Hilhorst said earlier Nelson had the degree of diversity and good community spirit the trust was looking for.

Site selection would need to be finalised by December this year. Mr Baldwin said the next stage was to get the shortlist narrowed to three.

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