

Public meeting – access to Matangi Station

7pm Tuesday, 13 February, Alexandra Bowling Club, 2 Poole Road, Molyneux Park, Alexandra

Many Central Otago residents have long regarded the arid backdrop to Alexandra as being public space. Walkers, bikers and runners greatly value this quintessential Central Otago landscape. The legal reality is that most of this land lies within Matangi Station which is leased in perpetuity from the Crown by Matangi Station Ltd. Public access onto pastoral leases is at the discretion of the farmer.

The Sanders family, who own Matangi Station Ltd., have graciously allowed public access for many years to this country on the doorstep of Alexandra.

Several years ago, due to a rising conflict between farming activities and recreational use, Matangi Station seriously considered banning public access.

However, the Sanders family, aware of the benefits to the local community, engaged with Mountain Bikers of Alexandra (MOA) and applied to Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) for a recreational permit. This permit allowed free access to some of the area, and paid access to the remainder of a newly created Matangi Mountain Bike Park for walkers, runners and bikers, while preserving the historical and botanical features of the area. The recreation permit provided structure and control over an ever-increasing amount of informal recreation use. Matangi MTB park is now a jewel in the crown of mountain biking in Otago, indeed New Zealand. The rugged and rocky natural features and semi-arid climate provide a setting for a unique style of riding.

Alexandra has developed many local riders who have moved onto the world stage of competitive mountain biking, while for others the park and other local riding trails are a significant draw card for choosing to live in the region.

If the sale of the Matangi Lease goes ahead, the new owner could well exclude public access.

A small group who are passionate about the area have been working under a tight deadline to develop a proposal to purchase a public access easement in perpetuity over the bike park area and some adjoining land, as an alternative to the Station being sold.

If successful, a public access easement would secure as of right, public access for walking, running and cycling to over 130km of trails.

A draft easement document has been prepared which secures a right of public access to trails whilst allowing extensive grazing to continue. The easement allows for a skills and jumps area, toilets and some further development of trails.

The impact that the easement in perpetuity will have on the farming operation and value of property has been calculated through a professional valuation. This figure is being used as a basis for a lump sum purchase price for the easement.

It is proposed to source the required funding through public pledges, charitable grants and corporate sponsorship.

Provided there is sufficient public support, the access committee will submit an offer to Matangi Station Ltd to purchase the public access easement and apply to LINZ for consent to the easement.

A public meeting will be held in Alexandra at 7pm on Tuesday, 13 February at the Alexandra Bowling Club, 2 Poole Road, Molyneux Park, Alexandra. The purpose of the meeting is to gauge the level of

community support for securing the easement and raising the necessary funds. The access committee will be available to answer questions. The contents of the easement document, maps of trails, valuation summary and a proposed funding model to maintain the park, will all be presented.

To protect access to Matangi for yourself and future generations, please show your support by attending the meeting, or emailing MOA mtbofalex@gmail.com.

For those who wish to review the easement document and maps beforehand, these can be accessed on the MOA website www.mtbofalex.com

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