

Gold Coast council wriggles out of Springbrook cableway 'bind' as alternative comes to light

By Dominic CansdaleABC Gold CoastLocal Government

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Springbrook on the Gold Coast is home to internationally significant environments. (ABC News)

In short:

There is a renewed push to go ahead with a controversial plan to install a cableway in the World Heritage-listed Gold Coast hinterland.

The proposal was first suggested decades ago and has been met with opposition from various groups, including the traditional owners.

What's next?

The council has voted to work to devise a route for the cableway.

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A longstanding proposal to go ahead with a major tourism project in the World Heritage-listed Gold Coast hinterland has edged forward despite a renewed push for an alternative.

Gold Coast City Council voted on Tuesday to work with the Queensland government on devising a route for a cableway at Springbrook as part of a

memorandum of understanding.

Council will consult with traditional owners, some of whom have already voiced their opposition to the plan, which was first suggested in the 1990s.

Some councillors have raised concerns about the Springbrook project, suggesting an alternative proposal from developers could be a better option.

Documents seen by the ABC show that a private consortium of developers, B.P Wharton, contacted senior council staff recently to promote an alternative route further north near Tamborine, outside of the World Heritage area.

A similar proposal has been raised in the past.



Gold Coast councillor Glenn Tozer says others option to the Springbrook cableway should be considered. (ABC Gold Coast: Dominic Cansdale)

'The wrong message'

Councillor Glenn Tozer voted against the Springbrook proposal, which he said would threaten the "precious" World Heritage environment.

"Development in that area will result in a risk – at least some concern – to the World Heritage designation," he said.

Cr Tozer said the council should consider alternative options in other areas.

"We want to invite investment, not create something that is a market competitor," he said.

"Economically we're sending the wrong message to the market."

But councillor Mark Hammel said Springbrook was the only option being considered at the moment.

"Reference is made to a possible other proponent or location," he said.

"They've had a couple of meetings and have sent through an email with some pretty pictures — that's not an application."

Council voted 10-five in favour of the Springbrook cableway proposal, slating \$500,000 to develop a route and consult with First Nations groups.

\$150,000 has already been spent on a pre-feasibility study.



The Skyrail near Cairns, being ridden here by former Prime Minister Gillard, is considered a successful example for the Gold Coast. (AAP: Alan Porritt)

Long road to reality

The former Labor government rejected the council's past attempt to develop a route for the Springbrook project, citing the need for traditional owner consent first.

But last month a report to council stated that the registered native title claimant, Dangan Balun, did not support the project and requested more

information about the route.

"Council got themselves into a bit of a bind," council chief executive Tim Baker said.

"Last time around it was, 'Do no further work until you get First Nations approval.'

"First Nations communities have come to us, by and large, and said, 'Until you give us more detail, we can't give you approval.'"

Ahead of his election in October, Premier David Crisafulli voiced his broad support for the cableway project.

Even with traditional owner consent, the Springbrook cableway faces a long and complicated environmental approval process, including ratification from the World Heritage Committee and federal approval.