



Air park plan tipped

60 homes, industry and tourism for aerodrome

FORMER Olympian and champion ironman Grant Kenny is part of a leading consortium proposing to purchase and redevelop Evans Head Aerodrome, creating an industrial aviation hub, a residential component and a museum at the heritage-listed site.

The Evans Head Airpark proposal includes developing at least 60 exclusive homes with direct access to flying facilities as well as an industrial complex attracting aviation-linked businesses to the area.

The proposal is one of three presented to the council after submissions closed earlier this month, calling for expressions of interest in developing a residential airpark.

Richmond Valley Council's director of environmental services, Ken Exley, said he was 'blown away' by the calibre of proponents and hoped to present a report to the May council

meeting.

One consortium is led by respected businessman and passionate aviator Peter Lynch, who currently heads mining exploration company Waratah Coal and brings more than 20 years of top-level industry experience to the table. He has extensive experience developing large projects, like the Central Queensland mine Oaky North, a \$240 million project.

But the lure of Evans Head had more to do with his interest in aviation and his love of the local area.

"When the council called for expressions of interest for aviation-related activities it wasn't hard to pull together a key group," he said.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to develop a strong aviation hub along the Northern Rivers coastline," Mr Lynch said. "The local community has done well to preserve this histor-

ic aerodrome having it heritage listed.

"An airpark development was identified by the Heritage Council and Plan of Management as the best opportunity for the long-term future of what is an important piece of our history."

Well aware of the planned aged care complex, Mr Lynch said remaining aerodrome land was suitable for his project.

"There is a lot of land there," he said. "We just need to work out the details."

Mr Lynch said the proposal, for 60 residential homes, with direct access to runways, and 10 commercial sites, was modest in comparison to most existing airparks.

■ **More on Page 2**



Big players lay detailed air park plans before council

■ From page 1

"It needs to be large enough to cover contributions to the body corporate and to create a sinking fund for modest improvements, so we can remove the financial burden of running the airpark from the council," he said.

He said employment and training opportunities would be provided.

Keen to work with the community, Mr Lynch said the plans included a significant aviation mu-

seum in the remaining Bellman Hangar.

Acknowledging the significant role the aerodrome played in the training of pilots during World War II, the group is proposing to construct a museum on site, with the initial focus being the sole remaining Bellman Hangar which would be restored as part of the plan.

A RAAF F-111 fighter bomber is also proposed to be displayed on site, once the aircraft are decommissioned in 2010.

"Ultimately the aim is

to have a museum of such size and array of exhibits to act as a major tourism drawcard for Evans Head into the future," Mr Lynch said.

A boutique motel and convention centre as well as camping facilities could also be established to provide further options to pilots and aviators, while still servicing the mainstream tourism custom.

The airpark would continue to offer vital community services to the residents of Evans Head.

including maintaining existing air ambulance and fire-fighting facilities as well as charter and general aviation-related businesses.

Regular public transport services are also planned to be established at the airstrip.

Mr Kenny, who co-owns the Curry-Kenny Aviation Group - Australia's largest privately owned aviation fleet with more than 110 aircraft - has pledged to establish a business on site, providing a crucial drawcard.