

Preserving a Reserve



Mt Cavendish Scenic Reserve from the north east. Rare ferns occur on the steep bluffs above the road. Dense silver tussock grassland occurs across the top of the reserve. Photo: David Norton

The creation of reserves is usually greeted with sighs of relief by those who have been advocating them, especially if their creation involved battles with bureaucracy or developers. However, as these two reports make clear, that is not the end of the story — in some cases the battles might have just begun.

Case 1: Mt Cavendish Scenic Reserve Gondola Proposal by David Norton and Colin Burrows

The Mt Cavendish Scenic Reserve is one of 15 scenic reserves along the Port Hills above Christchurch which together make up a combined area of only 319.6 hectares — approximately 0.03 percent of the Port Hills. Such reserves have immense importance from a recreational, scientific and aesthetic point of view.

Ever since a recent proposal to build a

gondola top station and restaurant on the reserve, Mt Cavendish has been at the centre of controversy. The application, by PAYEO Developments Ltd, was turned down after the Canterbury United Council advised the Lyttelton Borough and Heathcote County Councils that it contravened the Summit Road (Canterbury) Protection Act 1963, an Act administered by the United Council. Since then the developers have taken the decision to the Planning Tribunal which is due to hear it soon.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society is of one of several groups that have