

A romantic row in one of Pukekura Park's traditional wooden clinker boats may soon be a thing of the past.

Plastic moulded lookalikes will replace four of the boats this summer, as the New Plymouth District Council looks to renew the ageing fleet.

Park curator Chris Connolly said that after numerous refurbishments, four of the 10 historic row boats were now considered beyond repair.

"The old wooden boats, a lot of them are rotten and we've been trying to repair them for a number of years now. We've repaired them as much as we can," he said.

Mr Connolly said the boats, which were of varying ages and timbers, cost about \$3000 a year to keep afloat.

Auckland company Mac Boats is supplying the plastic replacements which retail for about \$3400 each.

Mr Connolly said the council had looked at its options and decided to trial the plastic boats which were considered hardy and cost effective.

"We were happy with the stability and the size of them," he said.

Friends of the Park president David Medway said he trusted the council to find the right replacement for the wooden clinkers but it was vital boating remained a part of the park.

"It's important to have facilities for boating on the lake. Friends are supportive of the continuation of boating activities. It's been on the lake for over a hundred years," Mr Medway said.

Mr Connolly said it had been important to retain the clinker-boat style and he wanted the new vessels to fit the atmosphere of the park.

"One of my big concerns was the visual look of it. I wanted to retain the traditional wooden boat look in keeping with the traditional look of the park," he said.



**Plastic look:** Pukekura curator Chris Connolly believes the plastic model suits the park, as a replacement for wooden ones, right, that have provided entertainment for generations. Main photo: CAMERON BURNELL

The council would monitor the plastic models this summer, and if the boats proved popular it was likely the remaining wooden boats will be replaced as they went out of service, although it was possible new wooden ones would be sought.

The boats pulled from service are in storage and the council is yet to decide their fate.

Members of the public spoken to

by the *Taranaki Daily News* said their main concern was that plastic boats would not go with the traditional look of the park.

"My first reaction is that's awful," Sue Cunninghame, of New Plymouth, said. "The world is full of it [plastic]. It really won't suit the atmosphere. Plastic will make it look like Disneyland."

■ Zaryd Wilson is a Witt journalism student

