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For immediate release from the Air New Zealand Queenstown International Marathon, for further information visit www.queenstown-marathon.co.nz

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GOODBYE MARATHON HILL, HELLO NEW 'FIRST HALF' COURSE FOR 2017 AIR NZ QUEENSTOWN INTERNATIONAL MARATHON

The removal of the infamous 'marathon hill' and the introduction of a new limited capacity half marathon course are the main innovations for the 2017 Air New Zealand Queenstown International Marathon.

Entries for the 2017 Air New Zealand Queenstown International marathon will go on sale on Thursday at 11am (NZT), and on the back of a record breaking and hugely successful 2016 event (9,544 entries), organisers are expecting demand to be high across all race distances, with a number of innovations to further excite those taking part.

The 2017 event will take place on Saturday November 18 and will include significant new innovations, including a strictly limited capacity half marathon course taking in the first half of the Air New Zealand Marathon course for the first time, starting and finishing at stunning Millbrook Resort.

This new 'First Half' race option sits alongside the existing NZ Sotheby's RE Half Marathon but will be limited in numbers (final number to be confirmed), with the proviso however that entrants have competed in any previous race distance through the event's three year history.

IRONMAN Oceania Managing Director Dave Beeche says the event must continue to innovate and provide fresh and exciting challenges to those returning year upon year, with the new 'First Half' a significant part of that thinking.

"This is a loyalty offer, an event exclusively for our previous customers on a very limited capacity basis. This will offer competitors a chance to enjoy perhaps the most stunning part of the full Air New Zealand Marathon course, taking in Arrowtown, Arrow River Trail and Lake Hayes before finishing back at Millbrook."

That is not the only change to the event however, with confirmation that the affectionately nicknamed 'marathon hill' has been removed from both the full and half marathon courses (at the 31km mark in the full marathon).

With the completion of repairs to the parts of the trail that were washed away prior to the first event in 2014, competitors will for the first time experience the 'original' section of the course on the Twin Rivers Trail alongside the Kawarau River when they line up in 2017.

"While marathon hill has become something of a landmark on the course and many people have commented on the challenge that it provides, there is no doubt that the work done by the Queenstown Trails Trust will mean a new and less hilly challenge for all competitors in the Air New Zealand Marathon and the Sotheby's Half," said Beeche.

Indeed it is thanks to the funds provided by the Air New Zealand Queenstown Marathon to the Queenstown Trails Trust that the work on the Twin Rivers Trail has been completed.

Trust CEO Mandy Kennedy knows that competitors are going to love the changes – for multiple reasons!

"Now that the repair work to the Twin Rivers Trail is complete we are delighted the 2017 marathon and half marathon course will run alongside the reinstated trail – it is a truly beautiful part of the Queenstown Trail network with lots of greenery and birdsong. Combine that with the fact that it is flat and we have no doubt the competitors will enjoy it," said Kennedy.

"The Queenstown Trails Trust constantly strives to ensure our trail network is the best it can possibly be and our sincere thanks go to Air New Zealand Marathon competitors and organisers for their ongoing support which is invaluable."

Beeche says the 'new' course is more a case of going back to the future.

"We are at last able to return to the original course that we had planned, something that will mean a new challenge for those taking part. 'Marathon hill' was a wonderful short term solution and for some provided one of the real talking points of the event – and a few great grimaces for our photographers! But thanks to the wonderful work of our official charity the Queenstown Trails Trust we can now take runners on the originally planned riverside trail course and past yet more amazing scenery as they approach the finish line."

Organisers will offer the same shuttle bus service to the start and from the finish at Millbrook Resort for the new First Half event, ensuring that no one misses out on the fun of the overall event finish line and prize giving in Queenstown, while Millbrook will put on a show of its own in what will surely be one of the most spectacular finish lines for a half marathon event in the world, as competitors wind their way through the Resort to the finish near The Avenue.

‘The atmosphere at Millbrook on marathon weekend is truly amazing and we are delighted to be a part of this iconic event. We couldn’t resist the opportunity to host runners both at the start and now the finish of the ‘First Half’. The natural surroundings of Millbrook provide us with a wonderful venue and we have no doubt will help create a fitting atmosphere and finish line for runners and supporters to enjoy,” said Brian Howie, Director of Operations, Millbrook Resort.

The Air New Zealand Queenstown International Marathon will feature a number of events, including the Kids Race (2.2km from Queenstown Gardens to the finish line at the Queenstown Recreation Ground), the AIA 10km, the NZ Sotheby’s RE Half Marathon, the new First Half and of course the full Air New Zealand Marathon.

ENTRIES OPEN THIS THURSDAY

Entry to all events opens online at 11am on Thursday December 1st, for further information and to enter the Air New Zealand Queenstown International Marathon, [CLICK HERE](#)

‘FIRST HALF’ COURSE DESCRIPTION

Runners make their way down The Avenue at Millbrook Resort, right onto Malaghans Road, left onto Manse Road, left onto Surrey Street, right onto Villiers Street and onto Buckingham Street through Arrowtown, straight ahead onto Nairn Street & right onto Arrow River track, after third bridge turn right up track, across and left on to Centennial Avenue, turn right to cross McDonnell Road and left onto Hogans Gully Road, left onto Arrowtown- Lake Hayes Road across onto Lake Hayes lakeside trail at the northern entrance and around Lake Hayes (clockwise direction), exit lake on to Rutherford Road, turn right onto Slope Hill Road, right onto Speargrass Flat Road, left onto Mill Vista Lane, up Christine’s Hill and in to Millbrook Resort. Cross McEntyre’s Lane, left on to Ayrburn Ridge, turn right on to Taramea Lane, through Millbrook Village Centre and to the finish area by The Avenue.

DONATIONS TO QUEENSTOWN TRAILS TRUST

The Air New Zealand Queenstown International Marathon has donated over \$110,000 to official charity partner the Queenstown Trails Trust in the three years it has been run, including \$40,474.50 raised by and on behalf of the participants in 2016.

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