

From empty paddocks to a thriving community bike space

Lichfield School, South Waikato

Lichfield School transformed unused land into a bike track and community hub, increasing daily physical activity and access for all students.

The Challenge

As a small rural school, Lichfield School had limited physical activity options. While it served as a central hub for play, there was no bike track, limited equipment, and few alternative spaces for students to be active.

The Solution

Through its Healthy Active Learning (HAL) journey, the school worked alongside Sport Waikato to reimagine its environment, including:

- Designing and building a 170-metre bike track with challenge features
- Accessing external expertise for cycle skills training
- Securing funding through Sport NZ's Tū Manawa fund (administered by Sport Waikato) to purchase bikes for student use

Why It Worked

Low barriers to participation

- Bikes were provided, removing the need for students to bring their own.

School-based delivery

- The track is accessible during school hours and integrated into break times and PE.

Strong partnerships

- Support from Sport Waikato, council partners, and the local community enabled both planning and delivery.

Community contribution

- Local farmers, parents and whaanau contributed time and resources, reducing costs and building ownership.



Students

93

Bikes available for all students (removing access barriers)

Bike Track

170m track built

Daily use during break times and PE

Community Use

Regular weekend use

Increased community engagement beyond school hours



System Impact

- Daily opportunities for physical activity embedded into the school environment
- Development of cycling skills through structured learning
- Strengthened role of the school as a rural hub for recreation and connection

School and Community Outcomes

- Increased student enthusiasm and participation in physical activity
- Improved confidence and skill development
- Regular use of the space by families and local youth outside school hours

Learnings

- Environmental changes can significantly increase participation
- Removing equipment barriers is critical in rural settings
- Community involvement strengthens sustainability and ownership

Next Steps

- Develop a pump track extension
- Add further obstacles and features
- Enhance the space with planting and seating to build on the school's role as a rural hub for activity and connection

Scalability

This model demonstrates how rural schools can transform underutilised space into active environments by combining:

- School-led design
- Targeted funding
- Community support
- Partnerships with organisations like Sport Waikato

It can be adapted by other schools looking to increase participation and create shared community spaces.

[Read the full story.](#)

“There is a lot more enthusiasm and positivity towards activity as it has given the students something new to do.”

– Karen Care, Principal



SPORT
WAIKATO
Hei painga mā te iwi

