

Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan

FACILITIES & ACTIVE SPACES

Appendix 2

An aerial photograph of a wooden boardwalk winding through a dense forest. A person is riding a bicycle on the boardwalk. The boardwalk has wooden railings and is elevated above the ground. The forest is lush with green trees and vegetation. The image is partially obscured by large geometric shapes in teal, light green, and white that form a stylized 'X' or 'Y' shape across the top and left sides of the page.

March 2024

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METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following section contains facility and code (or activity) specific information including strategic context, demand (inclusive of trends) and the nature of facilities and active spaces, their supply and factors pertinent to their optimisation.

Much of the material is an aggregation of other primary data or commissioned research.

The information is aligned to national facilities strategies, where these exist, or contains summary information from regional studies that have been completed.

Glossary/definition of terms

NZSSS	New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census data
Rangatahi	Young people aged 12 – 17 years
Tamariki	Young people aged 5 – 11 years
Adults	People aged 18 years and older

Source material

Demand

There are six sources of information typically used to capture demand. This is accompanied by additional data supplied via relevant national and/or regional strategies should these exist.

Active NZ

This is a national survey with a statistically robust data set for the Waikato region. The population profile is standardised against the demographic profile of the Waikato. Captured throughout the year (January to December), issues of seasonality and COVID are smoothed.

There are several pieces of information from this survey that are included in this report, including:

- Previous 7-day participation data, which is often a proxy for regular participation, often in a competition or club setting
- Annual participation data, which indicates where activities are typically occasional or recreational
- Next 12-month data which is an indicator of intention to participate, and can be used to suggest latent demand

Voice of Rangatahi (VoR) – this is captured, by Sport Waikato, through surveying of secondary school-aged youth from our regional high schools/colleges to capture participation information from within and outside of school hours. VoR for this section is populated alongside Active NZ demand analysis for Rangatahi populations to give indication of participation preferences outside of curriculum.

New Zealand Secondary School Sports (NZSSS) Census – this is longitudinal data, collected in and by secondary schools, that enables detailed analysis of participation by Rangatahi in particular sports codes over time, and therefore can be used to identify demand and demand trends. In this plan, the trend data compares change over a three-year time period and therefore smooths the impact of COVID.

Regional Sports Organisation and Club Survey – this data, has been collected by Sport Waikato to understand the ways in which our region participates in and provides for sport, the barriers faced, and fluctuation of membership over a 5-year period at a district and regional level so correlations can be made with Active NZ data. While there was a strong response rate from our region's codes, it is important to note that information was not collected from each and every club, therefore trends are indicative, and the number of members is an under-estimate.

Regional Community Survey

This data has been collected by Sport Waikato to understand the ways in which our local communities participate in play, active recreation and sport, drivers and barriers to participation along with feedback on preferred areas (facilities and active spaces) for investment to growth participation.

Supply

Sport Waikato has worked hard over the past decade to capture and record facilities through regular audits. In previous Facilities Plans this information has been listed. Progressively the data has been entered into a Facility Planning Tool so that the specific information can be easily updated and interrogated, when required.

In this iteration of the Plan, the information is available through the [Sport New Zealand Facility Planning Tool](#) which contains detailed facility information, while Sport Waikato have partnered with ActiveXChange using the [SportsEye](#) online platform to ensure regional facility inventory is populated alongside the National Infrastructure Database. Coupled with live information, including membership data and population profiling, this platform enables benchmarking and planning for growth/demand through gap analysis methodology.

SportsEye contains key demographic data at a community level including deprivation, inactivity, and health indicators. Contact Sport Waikato for more information.

Planned, new, refreshed or repurposed facilities change the landscape of opportunities and through the use of online tools, any impact of these on supply will be automatically updated.

Assessing priorities

National and Regional Strategies

When undertaking this regional plan, consideration is given to each code's national and regional strategic priorities. These Facility or Actives Spaces Strategies are developed using a similar process of assessing facility supply across a hierarchy (local, regional, national, international) and mapping current and future demand. In many cases, they provide a national and regional baseline of provision with assumptions regarding assessment of facilities provided in school settings. Detailed information at a code level is available through links in the relevant facility chapter.

Trends and developments in the code (e.g., game format, competition development etc), associated facilities (e.g., artificial and hybrid facilities, preference for indoor courts), the impact of (for example) New Zealand hosting international tournaments, and sports being selected for Olympic games will also have an impact on both supply and demand, which is reflected in the regional and national strategies.

These strategies provide benchmarks for local, sub-regional, regional and national supply, and preferred methods for obtaining adequate supply against facility hierarchy.

Priorities for development

Understanding priorities for development is based on evidence and assumptions regarding supply and demand. Demand is the more challenging variable to forecast as it is related to a complex relationship between participation patterns (who is doing what) and how these shift with demographic change and varying participation patterns.

For example, an aging population, as is common across the Waikato Region, is less likely to participate in some activities (e.g., rugby) and more likely to adopt others (e.g., group exercise, swimming).

In addition, the nature of sport and recreation is dynamic, and in recent years there have been new activities emerge (e.g., futsal, pickleball) and a changing nature of sport delivery (e.g., netball increasingly being played indoors).

Optimising facilities

There are also initiatives that will occur that make facilities more accessible, and therefore, create either more supply or increase demand. Facilitating this through enhanced transport links, hubbed spaces, or partnered provision form a key part of facility optimisation, with the need to maintain and enhance our current network of facilities being a regional priority of this Plan, particularly when considering also the current fiscal environment.

Decision Making Criteria

After obtaining data on regional supply and demand through the various means outlined in this methodology section, decisions made on Facility Priorities, outlined at the end of each facility chapter, are guided by the agreed regional Decision-Making Criteria, which is outlined in the [Facility Development Section of the WRASP](#).

Facility Types

Active spaces and places, that is, where play, active recreation and sport take place, requires a clear definition of each activity and its associated facility requirements. We acknowledge that there are blurred boundaries across activity and facility types, along with increasing trends for changing preferences in places to participate. For example, football can be play, active recreation and sport depending on how it is engaged in, and can occur on indoor court surfaces, grass or artificial fields. Many sports/activities played indoors can also be played outdoors. There are also a number of facilities, spaces and places that are traditionally defined as sport spaces (e.g. indoor and outdoor courts, playing fields, aquatic facilities, BMX tracks) which are often used for recreational and play purposes.

For most, participation expectations are met through multi-use facilities with the flexibility to service a broad range of activities with and increasing trend for sports/activity providers to be accommodating with a variety of spaces and places to ensure the community has the opportunity in participate in lieu of purpose built assets. In contrast high performance and competitive sport have more stringent facility specifications which often preclude other activity types.

The Plan provides an overview of facility development needs through the lens of facility types (facility, spaces and places chapters). In some instances, multiple sports are connected to a facility type while other sports have unique facility needs. Therefore, it is important to note that multiple facility chapters may need to be reviewed when assessing priorities and guidance. The below table outlines the facilities that are the focus of the 2024 Plan.

Facility, Spaces and Places	Play, active recreation and sports that typically use facility types
Indoor courts	Netball, basketball, badminton, volleyball, indoor bowls, handball, floorball, ultimate frisbee, pickleball and futsal
Indoor space	Rock Climbing, Table Tennis, Martial Arts, Kapa Haka, Yoga, Dancing, Group Fitness, Cricket Bowling Lanes There is currently no spaces and places chapter for this sub-category, however trends identified in the indoor courts and clubrooms/community hub chapters should guide decision making on these spaces.
Aquatic	Swimming, water polo, Flippa ball, diving, underwater hockey, synchronised swimming, canoe/kayaking. Aquatic facilities are primarily used for learn to swim, recreational use, aquatic play and therapeutic use.
Artificial turf – hockey	Hockey Should be considered alongside outdoor courts chapter
Outdoor courts	Tennis, netball, pickleball, hockey and futsal
Sports fields (inclusive of synthetic fields)	Football, rugby, rugby league, touch, cricket, lacrosse, softball, baseball, ultimate frisbee

Facility, Spaces and Places	Play, active recreation and sports that typically use facility types
Recreational Parks	Disc Golf, Cross Country, Play and Recreational Use This is currently no spaces and places chapter for this sub-category, however trends identified in the overarching strategy should guide decision making on these spaces.
Athletics tracks	Athletics
Equestrian	Show jumping, dressage, eventing, endurance, pony club, polo, polocrosse, rodeo, riding for the disabled (RDA)
Cycling - sport	Mountain biking, track cycling, BMX and road cycling (recreational cycling, commuter cycling)
Squash court	Squash
Gymnastics	Aerobics, artistic, rhythmic, trampoline, recreational gymnastics
Water based sports environments	Rowing, canoe racing, kayaking, waka ama, dragon boating, sailing, surf lifesaving
Club rooms and community hubs	ALL codes – typically indoor spaces that are non-court related spaces
Bowling, croquet, petanque facilities	Bowling, croquet, petanque
Golf courses	Golf, footgolf, frisbee golf, and driving ranges
Tracks and trails	Walking, tramping, running, horse trekking (bridle trails), off road cycling
Playgrounds and playable spaces	Destination and local playgrounds
Skateparks	Skateboards, scooters, roller-skating

INDOOR COURTS

Strategic Context

Indoor court facilities are characteristically used by sports codes such as basketball, badminton, volleyball, indoor bowls, futsal, indoor and inline hockey, along with the addition of nationally emerging sports such as handball (now in top 10 sports participated in by rangatahi), pickleball and floorball. Indoor courts are also utilised by user groups for martial arts, group exercise, table tennis, dance, Parafed wheelchair sports and many other informal and recreational uses.

There is a **growing trend for 'spur-of-the-moment', casual use** and pay for play. Many facilities are providing this option to increase utilisation and optimisation of facilities and meet user demand.

There are several indications of a rapidly **increasing preference for indoor sport provision**, and, to enhance the participant experience for playing traditional outdoor-based sports indoor, ie: netball. This is driven by demand for a more consistent, reliable and comfortable experience, opportunities to participate in the evening, in spaces which are often accompanied by better quality amenities including changing facilities, social spaces and cafes.

In summary, **indoor court spaces are used by a wide variety of codes and activities, with a trend towards indoor participation.**

Demand and Participation Analysis

The pattern of indoor sport and recreation participation in the Waikato is reflecting changes in population distribution and demographics and aligns to national trends for participation.

Nationally, New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) data indicates that participants' appetite for formal indoor court sports varies by code with growth in volleyball and futsal. Active NZ (2021) also highlights significant growth in futsal and basketball by **rangatahi**, with basketball also being the most participated indoor sport outside of school hours.

A facility development feasibility report by Waikato Badminton Association (2018) highlighted that participation in badminton is suffering from facility capacity problems resulting in static and negative growth. Although static growth over the three years to 2022, WBA have recently reported a growth in 13% in membership between 2022 and 2023 across their 21 affiliated clubs (Badminton Annual Report, 2023). Badminton is also popular across a wide demographic and is the 7th most popular sport at a secondary school level. It has opportunities for growth with increased supply of facilities. Although played on multi-purpose courts, competitive badminton is best played in specifically designed and equipped facilities.

The National Facilities Strategy for Indoor Sports highlights strong growth in **indoor sports** is typically at the expense of outdoor sports ([National Facilities Strategy for Indoor Sports \(Sport New Zealand, May 2014\)](#)). An example of this is the trend for netball to require indoor court provision to complement outdoor netball courts. Indoor courts are increasingly being used to accommodate elite senior and college grade games as part of their development pathways, and for retaining players in the sport. Netball New Zealand Facilities Strategy (2011).

A key issue for supporting the growth of Futsal in New Zealand is gaining access to appropriate indoor venues. [New Zealand Football National Facilities Strategy Update \(2016\)](#).

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in sports using indoor courts, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021) Voice of Rangatahi Survey (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Basketball					
Tamariki (5-11)	7%	6%	No data	12%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	15%	19%	No data	15%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			12%		
Adults	1%	1%	4%	3%	Static
Volleyball					
Tamariki (5-11)	0%	2%	No data	3%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	7%	11%	No data	16%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			7%		
Adults	1%	1%	No data	3%	Static
Futsal					
Tamariki (5-11)	0%	1%	No data	5%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	0%	4%	No data	12%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			3%		
Adults	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Badminton					
Tamariki (5-11)	2%	1%	No data	4%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	6%	6%	No data	14%	Static
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			7%		
Adults	1%	1%	3%	5%	Static

Other codes that may use indoor facilities to ensure facility optimisation experienced the following growth during the same period (Regional Club Survey 2022):

- **Indoor Bowls:** -14%
- **Floorball:** +14%
- **Inline Hockey:** +12% (Indoor Hockey has taken a greater focus amongst participation in New Zealand. There are several indoor competitions starting up around New Zealand as a result of this focus and demand)

- **Cheerleading:** +36%
- **Gymnastics:** +10%
- **Pickleball:** +133%
- **Martial Arts:** +10%

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Basketball	1,874	0%	↓8 students
Volleyball	1,631	29%	↑364 students
Futsal	803	19%	↑130 students
Badminton	786	-14%	↓131 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO - Commentary
Netball (14 clubs responded)	7,280	+3%	Note the move to indoor play
Basketball (8 clubs responded)	1,264	+15%	Increase in all leagues. Largest growth in Hamilton and across secondary school participation. Thames Valley reported growth in number however no primary miniball league for (2021)
Badminton (11 clubs responded)	470	-6%	Decline membership in Thames, static growth in South Waikato, Hamilton, Waipā with increase in other districts mainly through social play
Parafed (2 clubs responded)	196	+13%	N/A
Volleyball (2 clubs responded)	94	+52%	Increase in demand across Waikato Volleyball areas. Both in social and competitive volleyball with largest growth in Tamariki and Rangatahi
Floorball (1 club responded)	40	+14%	N/A

Summary of demand

The demand for indoor facilities is highly dependent on the age profile of the community.

There is increased demand created by:

- Increasing participation in indoor sports (eg basketball, futsal)
- Increased demand for outdoor codes to be played indoors (eg netball)
- New codes putting pressure on current provision (eg pickleball, floorball)
- Wider range of activities using indoor courts (martial arts, dance, group exercise)
- Increased demand saturating supply
- Increasing population in the Waikato region putting increased demand in some areas
- Increasingly aged population who participate in indoor recreation and sport.

Supply

Indoor facilities in the Waikato region range from large multi-use complexes to single use/single activity facilities and mid-sized indoor gyms. There are also many local community halls with only occasional sport and recreation use. There are a mix of ownership and management models including Council owned and managed, Council owned and externally managed, school owned and managed, or independently owned and managed, these models have impact on overall FTE count (refer to benchmark). In the Waikato it is recognised that **school indoor facilities are increasingly used for community, regional competitions, and training outside of peak education times.**

With 117 courts across the region, based on population benchmarks of 1 court per 7,800 population, there is enough supply across the Waikato. However, with only 43 FTE courts across the region, the **main contribution to the deficit is publicly available courts** (National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy 2024). Deficits are most prominent in areas of population growth, with Hamilton short 8 FTE courts (Hamilton Options Analysis Report, 2023). **School courts are an integral part of the facility network** and will assist in overcoming court deficits if more partnership agreements are formed between schools and local government and/or sporting organisations. Analysis gathered from schools in 2022 and cross referenced with the national strategy development highlights the following:

- 69 of the 117 courts across the region are consider 'publicly available school courts'
- 69% of secondary schools provide their courts for community use, with 46% of use being community use outside of school hours – highlighting opportunity to make more available
- 26% of Waikato Secondary schools are planning upgrades or new indoor courts (9 schools) – potential to work alongside schools to ensure reinvestment into assets has a focus on community provision

When discussing a court, note that the focus is on one full size netball court which is larger than a basketball court and contains 3-4 badminton or pickleball courts.

Benchmark

The [\(National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy \(Sport New Zealand, 2024\)\)](#) is the overarching strategic document for indoor court facilities, and works on a population benchmark of 1 court per 7,800 population. The strategy identified that the Waikato region network currently has a shortfall of 19 FTE courts, with a projected shortfall of 26 FTE courts by 2038 based on population and participation drivers. These forecasts take into account recent facility developments – i.e Gallagher Recreation Centre in Te Kuiti.

A full time equivalent (FTE) assessment has been made for each indoor court in our database based on the amount of community access is available at peak demand times (4-9pm weekdays and weekends).

Full Time Equivalent courts are calculated via the following metrics:

- Council/Public Facility – full available for community multi-sport = 1 FTE
- School Courts – with public access = 0.25 FTE
- School Courts – with no public access = 0 FTE
- Single Code Courts – with public access = 1 FTE (applicable to size, i.e 4 badminton = 1 FTE)
- Events Centre – public access from time to time = 0.5 FTE

Optimisation

Outside of accessing more school courts, a **strategy of adapting existing facilities to meet the needs of an aging population** is also required in many districts across the region. Facility providers should consider programming and scheduling beyond a traditional indoor sport model, with **increased provision for casualisation to maximise utilisation and accessibility**. The National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy (2024) highlights the following approaches to create or increase flexibility of spaces for community sport and recreation:

1. Convert - repurpose/reimagine suitable alternative spaces
2. Optimise - where practical extend life and/or expand suitable facilities to meet unmet demand
3. Rationalise – replace to better meet demand
4. Gap filling - where no existing facility, build a new facility.

(Avoid HP/code specification capture as a barrier at a community level)

Analysis and Insights

- The National Facility strategy considers that the national demand benchmark is 1 court per 7,800 population.
- Benchmark provision for Waikato population is 62 FTE courts in 2023 and 69 FTE by 2038
- Current supply is 117 courts or 43 FTE
- The Waikato region network currently has a shortfall of 19 FTE courts, with a projected shortfall of 26 FTE with largest deficit in Hamilton with 8 FTE short and project deficient of 14 FTE by 2043.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Indoor Courts – National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy \(2024\)](#)

[Indoor Courts - Netball New Zealand Facilities Strategy \(2011\)](#)

[Indoor Courts – Hamilton Options Analysis Report, RSL \(2023\)](#)

[Indoor Courts – Matamata Indoor Stadium Business Case, SGL \(2023\)](#)

[Indoor Courts - WBA Facility Development Feasibility Report – Eastlink](#)

[Sports Flooring – Advanced Flooring](#)

Recommendations & Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Indoor Courts.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City Council – Additional 8 Courts Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete feasibility and business case studies for indoor court options identified in Options Analysis Report (2023) – priority focus on growing catchments south and north of city. Develop the detailed functional and spatial requirements of the facility(s) based on facility mix. ▪ Secure partnership funding for capital and ongoing operational investment and expenditure. ▪ Work with neighbouring territorial authorities around planning and impact on sub-regional provision. ▪ Construct new indoor recreation centre based on timelines outlined in the ‘Facility Development’ priorities section. ▪ Continue to work in partnership with other facility providers to secure community sport access to a range of indoor courts in Hamilton.
PLAN > DESIGN > BUILD	

<p>Matamata-Piako District Council – 2 Court Community Facility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalise capital funding and shared use agreement for the development of a 2-court multipurpose facility at Matamata College ▪ Construct new indoor recreation centre based on timelines outlined in the ‘Facility Development’ priorities section.
<p>DESIGN > BUILD</p>	
<p>Taupō District Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exploration of future site options for new indoor court provision, optimal community access and secure key community partner/s. Decision on preferred option made. ▪ Consideration should be given to existing assets and the current and future of the Taupō Events Centre and its role as the sub-regional hub for indoor community sports, along with facility planning advancements in Tūrangi. ▪ Feasibility and business case for future indoor court provision undertaken that considers a wide range of users.
<p>PLAN > DESIGN</p>	
<p>All Councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain or enhance the indoor court network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore partnerships with schools and education providers ○ Focus on optimising and maintaining existing assets ○ Focus on flexible, accessible and inclusive provision for all, including low participation groups and aging population ○ A network approach - investigate sub regional supply and cross boundary partnerships ○ Focus on a full-size netball court model (including run-off's) with multipurpose markings for codes such as badminton, basketball, volleyball, futsal along with growth sports such as pickleball ▪ Consider the need for regional indoor court study following the completion of the updated National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy
<p>OPTIMISE / PARTNER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to facilitate the development of partnerships and physical hubs with flexible and adaptable spaces to meet the needs of play, active recreation, sport and the wider community • Collaborate with secondary schools regarding their facilities developments and upgrades

OUTDOOR COURTS

Strategic Context

Outdoor courts are frequently used by a range of active recreation and sports activities including, but not limited to, netball, tennis and 3x3 basketball. For many recreational users, **free or easy access makes these spaces ideal for pick-up games or individual practice**, with relatively low levels of infrastructure such as a hoop and some court markings.

Across the Waikato and nationwide, netball and tennis often share outdoor court facilities which provides a base for future co-location of a wider range of active recreation and sport activity. Minor changes to court configuration, and the use of moveable nets and hoops create **increased opportunities for multi-use**. The growth of emerging sports such pickleball has seen a change in the way some courts can be configured.

The development of hybrid turfs or appropriate multi-purpose marked acrylic surfaces will expand the range of activities that can use the space, increasing utilisation and therefore sustainability. It is always important to consider the durability of the playing surface and longevity of the underlying pavement when upgrading a sports surface with either synthetic or acrylic synthetic surfacing your typical solutions. Where standalone outdoor courts are not financially viable in their own right, **multi-use courts and multi-sport venues can be a more cost-effective approach for facilities to be sustained within communities**.

Hockey NZ's strategy (2023) around growing access to the game recognises the role outdoor multipurpose courts play in growing the game and highlights the **importance that these spaces are adaptable**.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in sports using outdoor courts, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Netball					
Tamariki (5-11)	8%	6%	No data	14%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	12%	10%	No data	16%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			9%		
Adults	2%	1%	4%	2%	Decreased
Tennis					
Tamariki (5-11)	2%	3%	No data	6%	Increase
Rangatahi (12-17)	6%	3%	No data	7%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			7%		
Adults	2%	2%	6%	7%	Decreased

Other codes that may use outdoor court facilities to ensure facility optimisation experienced the following growth during the same period (Regional Club Survey 2022):

- **Hockey:** +34%
- **Basketball:** +15%
- **Pickleball:** +133%

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Netball	2,428	-6%	↓160 students
Tennis	331	-7%	↓25 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO - Commentary
Netball (14 clubs responded)	7,280	+3%	N/A
Tennis (17 clubs responded)	1,028	+9%	Increase in memberships in Hamilton, Waipā Static growth in Ōtorohanga Decrease across all other districts.

Tennis

The Tennis New Zealand Strategic Framework (2017-2022) identifies some key challenges for tennis in New Zealand. Tennis clubs are often asset rich and cash poor, requiring new members to meet ongoing commitments. Along with many other traditional sports, **tennis faces a decline in formal participation, with traditional club membership being replaced with a preference for casual 'pay to play'**. Active NZ (2021) data for the Waikato region highlights that although tennis faces a decline in participation with its **remains a top 10 sport for adults** with 2% playing tennis and 7% indicating interest in playing tennis over the next 12 months. The emergence of pickleball is a potential development for tennis clubs and the use of outdoor courts.

Multi-sport venues potentially offer a cost-effective and sustainable approach for tennis facilities within communities and are becoming more common in New Zealand. **Consideration should be given to the sports best suited to partner with tennis** to maintain the suitability of the surface i.e netball, badminton, volleyball.

Netball

Netball remains a top 10 sport across all age groups (Active NZ data 2021), and the sport ranking highly among secondary schools (NZSSSC 2022 data). Sport Waikato's Regional Club Survey (2022) highlighted overall membership steady with 3% growth across responding clubs in contrast to Active NZ (2021) data which has seen a decline.

In recent years netball has addressed changing demographics and changing trends towards shorter games and social competitions.

Netball Waikato Bay of Plenty has indicated that

- Junior age-groups in the region continue to grow
- Youth-age groups remain static with no additional growth at secondary school (New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census 2022)
- Senior players are either seeking more social activity or competitive leagues held indoors.

In summary, **there is likely to be decreasing regional demand for outdoor courts used by tennis and netball**, with localised increases reflecting significant new young populations - most likely to be in Hamilton City and parts of Waikato and Waipā districts. However, **use by other sport and recreation activities could increase court utilisation.**

Supply

Current facilities range from large multi-court complexes through to single community courts such as those in the smaller rural communities. The larger complexes have a greater variety of surfaces. Smaller community courts traditionally tend to be asphalt and are mainly marked for both tennis and netball. With a total of **more than 300 sites across the region** offering outdoor court spaces, and **74% of these sites are located on ministry of education land, there are opportunities to partner with local schools to get the most out of existing assets** with a focus on multi-sport.

The majority of netball in the region is played on outdoor courts. Districts with static projected population growth should focus on maintaining existing assets vs developing new. Where indoor court space becomes available, Netball should consider the role these facilities play and therefore the potential conversion of outdoor courts to multi-purpose facilities.

Optimisation

Maximising the current supply requires a different approach to utilisation, including reconfiguring courts for multiple use, changing playing surfaces to suit a wider range of codes, and increasing accessibility to other activities.

Making changes of this nature will optimise facility use through increasing supply to a wider range of codes.

Analysis and Insights

- The challenge is to generate revenue to ensure the sustainability of outdoor court spaces therefore diversifying use to optimise utilisation is required
- Multiuse facilities with flexible layouts and co-located codes will all increase the potential for the asset to be well used and spread operational costs.
- A partnership approach should be taken to utilisation of existing assets and can usually occur through active programming by local community hubs, or via better partnership agreements with schools

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Outdoor Courts - The Tennis New Zealand strategic framework \(2017-2022\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts – National Facilities Guideline for Tennis 2018](#)

[Indoor Courts – National Indoor Sport & Active Recreation Facilities Strategy \(2024\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts – National Facilities Strategy for Outdoor Courts \(2024\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts - Netball New Zealand Facilities Strategy \(2011\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts - The Tennis New Zealand strategic framework \(2017-2022\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts – FIBA Outdoor Courts and Facilities Guide](#)

[Outdoor Courts – Technical Guides \(Sports&Play\)](#)

[Outdoor Courts – Fun and Functional Sport Surfaces](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Outdoor Courts.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain existing assets where viable. Ensure on-going repair and maintenance of existing facilities, including installation of lighting increase utilisation and safety aspects. ▪ Support Netball New Zealand centre and satellite model ▪ Support Tennis New Zealand Strategy to utilise facilities for alternative activities to increase utilisation and generate sustainable revenues ▪ Explore multi surface and multi-use court options to allow flexibility (netball, tennis, junior hockey, futsal and pickleball) while considering traditional indoor user groups i.e volleyball and basketball ▪ Explore partnerships with neighbouring councils and schools to continue network approach ▪ Promote the rationalisation/merger of clubs and/or shared facilities when appropriate, and where required rationalise underutilised facilities ▪ Optimise facilities through co-location and promotion of spaces – community hub approach ▪ Where feasible, and high utilisation of assets exists, consider investment into covering courts alongside indoor court recommendations.
OPTIMISE / SPORT CODES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively seek complementary sports codes to increase utilisation (basketball/netball, tennis/pickleball, football/hockey) ▪ Invest in flexible configurations including moveable nets and goals, a variety of markings ▪ Investigate synthetic surfaces with the greatest flexibility across codes

ARTIFICIAL TURF - HOCKEY

Strategic Context

Most grades of hockey competition utilise artificial turfs, often water based, although sand surfaces are also acceptable. Nationally many of these artificial turfs have been developed on a mix of Council or Ministry of Education land by Trusts or hockey associations. This pattern is also true for the Waikato. The network of facilities spans across several competitions including Waikato, Thames Valley, Bay of Plenty and Counties.

Historically, the artificial hockey surfaces have been in high demand and used almost exclusively for hockey. It is notable that in the Waikato there are no artificial turfs used for football, unlike in other regions.

[The National Hockey Facility Strategy \(Hutchinson et al. 2016\)](#) which guides the development of artificial hockey surfaces, proposes that all **hockey turfs are suitable for use by multiple sporting codes**. However, the different types of surfaces have an impact on suitability and desirability by each sports code. To grow the game, Hockey is taking a proactive approach to utilising multi-use artificial turf, some of which may not be suitable to adult/premier leagues due to size restrictions however suitable for growth versions of the sport such as Hockey 5s which only requires a field size of 40m x 23.7m.

All junior play can take place on appropriate synthetic surface tennis courts. The dimensions of a spoke facility should not be seen as a barrier to participation with suitable facilities including full size turfs (other community or school facilities), half turfs and school or community netball, tennis or multi-purpose courts. For example, three netball courts is considered a suitable size equivalent to a half turf.

The challenge of sports using artificial surfaces at similar times, creates overlapping demand for access. **Sustainable considerations also need to be applied to any artificial turf development**, with changes in development guidelines, and advancements in hockey surface development with a focus on 'carbon zero' and reduction in water requirements.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Player numbers in the Waikato catchment increased from 4,018 in 2015 to 4,738 in 2020 (including a 10% reduction in 2020 following COVID) with membership increasing by 31% since the National Hockey Facility Strategy (Waikato Hockey Facilities Feasibility Assessment 2022). This is consistent with the 34% growth indicated by clubs who filled out the Sport Waikato Regional Club Survey (2022). Hockey remains as a top 10 sport across secondary school participation at number 6 (NZSSSC 2022).

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Hockey, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Hockey					
Tamariki (5-11)	5%	4%	No data	7%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	8%	7%	No data	10%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			5%		
Adults	1%	0%	7%	2%	Decreased

Other codes that may use hockey facilities to ensure facility optimisation experienced the following growth during the same period (Regional Club Survey 2022):

- Netball: +3%
- Tennis: +9%
- Pickleball: +133%
- Futsal: +4% (Active NZ (2021) Rangatahi Data)

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Hockey	1337	11%	↑133 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Hockey (7 clubs responded)	589	+34%	Steady growth across Waikato Hockey area due to limited turf availability BOP Hockey (Taupō) increase in tamariki, decrease in secondary school and adult leagues. Thames Valley increase in junior players. Social adult hockey is on the rise across the region.

Supply

The current National Hockey Facility Strategy (2016) proposes that hockey implement a ‘Hub and Spoke’ approach to facility development and management, however it is worth noting that Hockey New Zealand are in the process of renewing their strategy due for completion in 2024. **86% of surfaces where hockey is the predominant user are water-based surfaces.**

The current approach sees the ‘Hub’ ideally located with the main association with access to a water-based turf, which serves as the base for most competitive hockey played on a full-sized turf and would be the main training base for the Association's senior and representative hockey. For the Waikato region, this is applicable with Innes Common, the home of Waikato Hockey as the ‘Hub’ and the Ngatea Hockey Facility as a subsidiary Hub for the Thames/Hauraki/Matamata sub region.

The ‘spokes’ should be additional facilities that are distributed throughout the region, providing local opportunities for junior competition and training. **Spoke facilities should be a surface suitable for hockey and allow a wide range of multiple use, for example tennis, netball, pickleball, football, futsal and basketball.**

Across the region there are 13 hockey specific locations with 10 being school sites. There are 4 sub-regional venues (Hamilton Boys, Waikato Diocesan, St Peters Cambridge, Thames Valley Ngatea) and 2 national/international standard venues at Waikato Hockey Venue (Innes Common) and Taupō Hockey.

Benchmark

National Hockey Facility Strategy (2016) proposes a **30 minute maximum travel time to training, with acceptable competition travel times of 45 minutes for juniors and 60 minutes for seniors.** The strategy identifies that once turf utilisation of 850 Players per Full Turf Equivalent they are operating at capacity and additional turf (space) is required. Based on pre-COVID numbers (2019), Waikato had 847 players per full turf equivalent (PFTE) indicating the need for additional turf (space) with little capacity to accommodate additional growth Strategy (Waikato Hockey Facilities Feasibility Assessment 2022).

A **hierarchy of turf facilities avoids over specification and provides a sustainable regional hub and spokes network.** The demand models identify the hours of turf time each team requires. A **turf's sustainable**

capacity is between 650 to 850 players per FTE, calculated at an association level, using a membership ratio of full-sized turf users (senior/ college) and part-sized turf users (juniors). The national benchmarks are:

- 75% senior/ college to 25% junior. Capacity is 650 players per FTE
- 50% senior/ college to 50% junior. Capacity is 750 players per FTE
- 25% senior/ college to 75% junior. Capacity is 850 players per FTE

Analysis and Insights

- There is an increase in secondary school, club and social hockey which will increase demand for full-sized hockey turfs.
- Based on the national benchmarks highlighted in the National Hockey Facility Strategy (2016) identified the region would be under increased facility pressure by 2033.
- Based on FTE calculations across player groups (juniors to seniors), Waikato Hockey's Facilities Feasibility Assessment (2022) highlighted that one additional FTE turf where Hockey is the primary user is required in Hamilton with the hub (Innes Common) being a potential location
- Regional Community Survey (2022) of Waipā residents highlighted lack of Artificial Turf as the highest dis-satisfaction rating (58%) of all community sport and recreational facilities and with proximity to Hamilton the role the regional hub plays in catering for sub-regional needs to be considered.
- Options for any additional turf, outside of hub locations, should focus on partnering with schools, which will: share cost; and optimise utilisation. Exploring options that enable multi-use will increase utilisation and enable the network of spokes is well spread.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Artificial Turf – Hockey NZ Facilities Strategy 2016](#)

[Artificial Turf – Hockey NZ Facilities Strategy 2024](#)

[Artificial Turf - Waikato Hockey Facilities Feasibility Assessment 2022](#)

[Artificial Turf - Knowledge Centre - ESTC - EMEA Synthetic Turf Council.](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Artificial Turf – Hockey.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City – Gallagher Hockey Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gallagher Hockey Centre continues to be developed as a high-quality regional hockey hub. The focus should be on maintaining and improving the existing facilities to provide a high-quality environment with an immediate focus on developing additional changing rooms to meet the needs of the current facility • Explore options/masterplan best location for new full-size turf and expanded training area (which will accommodate hockey 5's sized field) to meet capacity pressures in line with Hamilton Lake Domain Management Plan.
PLAN > DESIGN > BUILD	

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City Waipā District/ Waikato District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recommend that additional turf (spoke facilities) is explored across the Waipā network to support the regional hockey hub in Hamilton (Te Awamutu/Cambridge). ▪ Undertake feasibility study prior to any new turf development, including hierarchy and mapping of current turf network. ▪ Maintain, increase, and explore partnerships with schools and/or tertiary institutions. Recommended that a user agreements or lease are developed with the turf owners to enable hockey to develop and manage the hockey use of the turf, to secure a long-term access and management agreement
All other councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop renewal and maintenance schedules to ensure appropriately maintained assets. Ensure sufficient capital provision for renewal cycles and a balanced renewal capital profile (spread of investment across a number of years versus investment loaded in the same year(s)) ▪ Advocate for the development of multi-use facilities and/or school facility partnerships which configure existing synthetic surfaces so that they can be utilised for hockey and where feasible complimentary codes/users (i.e tennis, netball)
OPTIMISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore opportunities for indoor hockey in partnership with another providers, facility owners (including schools and/or tertiary institutions) to grow participation ▪ Consider recommendations and priorities which will come out of the Hockey NZ Facilities Strategy 2024

SPORTS FIELDS

Strategic Context

Demand for playing fields has been increasing across the region as the result of many factors. These include general participation growth, season extensions, and more variety in time options/delivery approaches. In response, local authorities, regional sporting organisations and schools are recognising the **needs for enhanced sports field quantities and qualities**. They are investigating both alternatives for future provision (such as sand carpet, hybrid, and artificial turf), and alternatives for optimising network collaborations to better use existing resources. Demand requires sports field surfaces that can be played on in any weather and provide a quality user experience.

A large number of playing fields are owned by council. Most sites have been established for many years, with a variety of maintenance and development plans. Many local authorities have outlined a **need to improve management of field utilisation by way of quality booking systems**. An understanding of utilisation would facilitate improved management of the regional network. The development of the Waikato Regional Sport Transition Plan for community and school sport is a significant development to assist in managing these cross-season pressures and will allow for improved management of field provision in the future.

Studies of winter and summer sports fields capacity and usage across Hamilton City Council, Waipā and the southern Waikato District Council (central Waikato) (Global Leisure Group 2020) were followed up by a study to consider current field supply and demand and the need for artificial turfs (Visitor Solutions, 2023). For this section, these reports will be used to consider demand and the proposed strategy, with some of the regional recommendations being able to be applied regionally wide.

Demand and Participation Analysis

The core field-based codes are rugby, rugby league, football, futsal, lacrosse, cricket, athletics, touch, softball and baseball. Sports fields can also be utilised for recreational activities ranging from kicking a ball, playing with children, walking or learning to ride a bike.

Some codes are under significant pressure with facilities at capacity, while others have access to facilities to meet current and future demand. **A key challenge is the large amount of activity focused on a small number of fields which often shared between multiple codes. This is exacerbated by demand for those fields on the same days of the week.** Councils and codes must work together to manage demand across the week to maximise utilisation of the existing network of fields.

Secondary school participation requiring fields varies by code (New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (2022)). In addition, new codes are available which are increasing in popularity, but still with relatively small participation numbers (for example, lacrosse).

Winter Demand Summary - (Global Leisure Group 2020)

There is a net decrease in demand for winter sports field across codes. Demand hours vary across different communities. The balance between weekend and weekday demand is largely dependent on the popularity of the codes in the area, the mix of junior and senior teams and the level of use by 'other' activities. In addition to regular rugby, league and football competition and training, a number of sports fields are used for a variety of other non-regular and 'one off' activities which include sports tournaments (eg, regional and national school tournaments, local school cluster events etc) and sport training and games (eg, holiday programmes, cross country training, non regular regional & games, school sport use and skill development programmes, summer code use etc).

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in sports using Sport Fields, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Summer Sports

Code	Participation last 7 days (2018)	Participation last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation demand
Cricket					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	3%	4%	No data	14%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	9%	4%	No data	5%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)		5%			
Adults	1%	1%	5%	2%	Static
Athletics					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	9%	8%	No data	12%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	14%	12%	No data	11%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)		5%			
Adults	0%	0%	1%	1%	Static
Softball					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	1%	1%	No data	3%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	3%	3%	No data	5%	Static
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)		1%			
Adults	0%	0%	1%	1%	Static
Lacrosse					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Adults	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Touch Rugby					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	6%	4%	No data	14%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	12%	13%	No data	12%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)		7%			
Adults	2%	1%	6%	4%	Decreased

Winter Sports

Code	Participation last 7 days (2018)	Participation last 7 days (2021)			Participation demand
Football					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	12%	11%	No data	21%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	24%	17%	No data	16%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			11%		
Adults	3%	2%	7%	2%	Decreased
Rippa Rugby/Rugby					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	11%	7%	No data	12%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	16%	8%	No data	13%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			5%		
Adults	2%	1%	6%	4%	Decreased
Lacrosse					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Adults	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Rugby League					
Tamariki (5-11 years)	1%	1%	No data	2%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17 years)	4%	2%	No data	6%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			3%		
Adults	0%	0%	0%	1%	Static

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Summer codes			
Athletics	227	-83%	↓1143 students
Touch	896	4%	↑38 students
Cricket	778	-7%	↓57 students

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Softball	156	-37%	↓91 students
Winter codes			
Rugby Union	2622	-2%	↓58 students
Football	2143	-9%	↓218 students
Rugby - Sevens	774	21%	↑132 students
Lacrosse	322	-36%	↓179 students
Rugby League	132	59%	↑49 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Athletics (9 clubs responded)	998	-17%	Decrease in membership across all districts apart from Thames.
Cricket (13 clubs responded)	1120	-3%	Steady membership numbers across Thames Valley Significant decrease in junior school numbers in Hamilton Increase in twilight social leagues (Hamilton) and inter-community competitions (Waipā)
Football (19 clubs responded)	5473	+16%	Growth in female participation and women's leagues. Areas of significant growth are towns just outside of Hamilton – Morrinsville and Ngaruawahia (both +140%), Tamahere (+76%).
Lacrosse (2 clubs responded)	102	+19%	
Rugby (36 clubs responded)	6959	+20%	Steady membership in King Country with growth in female participation.
Rugby League (6 clubs responded)	1146	-9%	N/A
Softball (5 clubs responded)	103	-27%	Waikato Softball reported static membership growth
Touch Rugby (RSO responded)	2149	-4%	Waikato Touch reported growth across Hamilton, Waikato and Waipā. Decrease in numbers in Waitomo and Ōtorohanga, Small increase in Matamata-Piako

Athletics

The Summer Sports Field Study (GLG 2020) identified 10 athletics clubs in the central Waikato region. Regional participant remains static, however membership numbers reported by clubs have fallen by an

average of 17% since 2019. Current participation highlights there is a minimum track time of between 1.5 to 2 hours per week required to enable a club to operate.

Current demand is projected to remain at a similar level by 2038 as the active population is not projected to change from the current level. It is estimated there is **sufficient capacity and therefore adequate supply for athletics to meet projected future demand through to 2038.**

It is anticipated that current facilities have the potential to meet demand for at least 3,300 members (44 hours supply x 75 members per hour). This is based on each club having the ability to operate at potential utilisation level of 75 members per track hour and the current club bookings per week. Porritt Stadium (refer to Athletics Track section), as the hub, has significant usage by school groups throughout the year.

Cricket

A total of 13 cricket clubs and 31 schools with cricket teams were identified within the central Waikato region and are confined to the district organisations of Hamilton and Waikato Valley.

Waikato Valley has a large geographical area where it is difficult to supply good facilities across the region and therefore teams are used to travelling. Northern Districts Facilities Assessment (Veros, 2023) indicated that across the Waikato Valley, there has been an improving supply of quality grass blocks albeit this is heavily reliant on volunteer support for curation of grounds. This assessment highlighted that **cricket in the sub-region is lacking indoor facilities which restrains growth particularly across Taupō and Hamilton which would help service key regional/sub-regional sport parks where cricket is located.**

The Summer Sports Field Study (GLG 2020) identified **current facilities have capacity to meet current and future demand**, however there is **no capacity to accommodate any forecast future growth, e.g. female participation.** If competition was to spread across the weekend (ie Sunday competition) the capacity of the current network could be increased significantly.

There are geographical gaps in provision in the Western and Northern areas of Hamilton. As a result, participants are required to travel to access the current network of clubs and their facilities. Consideration should be given to **developing partnerships with schools across the region to enable community access** to facilities in these areas.

Lacrosse

Lacrosse currently operates year-round with winter and summer competitions. The main driver for year-round competition has been **limited access to facilities which restrict the ability to meet demand.** Lacrosse is facing a shortfall of facilities at both summer and winter level. While difficult to quantify the current shortfall and potential impact on participation, lacrosse has demonstrated significant and sustained growth at all levels over the last 5 years.

Based on population growth, future demand is projected to remain at a similar level by 2038 as the active population is not projected to change from the current level. However, given the level of growth over recent years and the latent demand for lacrosse it is considered that demand could increase by 50% (5% a year) over the next 10 years.

With the current supply it is projected that future growth cannot be accommodated and additional provision is required. **Consideration should be given to developing a hub and spoke approach across the region**, with Lacrosse currently locating their games in Tamahere (Waikato District) and Marist Park (Hamilton).

Softball

Softball is currently centralised at Resthills Park, Hamilton with trainings and annual tournaments held at both Tom Voyle Park, Cambridge and Patterson Park in Ngaruawahia. **There are school teams based in Ōtorohanga, Te Awamutu, Morrinsville and Raglan who travel into Hamilton for competition games.**

Softball, similar to netball, operates a different model to many field-based codes, playing through a single venue. The Summer Sports Field Study (GLG 2020) identified **sufficient diamonds to meet current**

demand. Should demand increase, softball should consider should increasing play across the weekend (Sunday) and installing floodlights to enable increased participation across the week.

Although there have been game modifications, such as T Ball (typically played at school facilities), slow pitch and masters competitions, there is still declining participation in secondary school participants.

Rugby, Rugby League & Football

Demand for council supplied winter fields is predominantly made up of regular training and competition games by community-based teams involved in winter competition. Schools provide fields for their own training and competition. The winter season usually runs from early April to mid/late September. Demand peaks between May and August as junior competition is timed to fit the school term and senior competition and tapers off as competitions reach semi-finals and finals. Rugby, Rugby League and Football teams are not spread evenly across districts therefore utilisation of fields is not evenly spread.

Currently most competition games are played at the weekend with midweek training. If this tradition is to continue the weekend and weekday capacity will need to meet demand at those times. Travel times also need to be considered. While teams are generally willing to travel out of their immediate area for games, if there is no local training space, particularly for junior and youth grades, participation rates can be impacted as some people are unwilling or unable to travel a distance to train.

As the field size requirements are fairly similar for the three codes it is feasible to reallocate fields should there be a supply surplus in one code and a shortfall in another. The winter sports field study therefore considers not just surpluses and shortfalls within each code but over all three codes as a whole as well.

Artificial Sports Fields & Hybrid Turf

As the number of sports field surface development options increase, so too has the **level of service expectations** from users. No longer is the New Zealand sporting community prepared to put up with sports fields that are closed for weeks in a row - instead they are asking for a sports field surface that can be played upon in any weather and provides a quality experience.

The Waikato Sub-Regional Artificial Turf Study (Visitor Solutions, 2023) highlighted that there are a number of drivers that support investigation into artificial and hybrid sports fields, including when:

- 1) water restrictions impact grass field quality
- 2) topography and/or land parcel boundaries makes forming concentrations of grass fields difficult
- 3) 'back up' fields are required in a network during and after poor weather (especially for training)
- 4) capital funding is available, and it carries little opportunity cost downside, resulting in the establishment of a wider funding mix centralised sports training hubs are being established
- 5) take pressure of soil/sand fields
- 6) the only way demand can be met

It is important to see all artificial turfs within the context of the wider field network. Artificial turfs are a tool, 'but not the only tool one in the toolbox'. An optimal field network should contain a mix of all field types (sand dressed, sand carpet, hybrid and artificial turf, while artificial turfs are often better aimed at training and junior / social play where demand and field loading is the greatest (Sub-Regional Artificial Turf Study, 2023).

Artificial fields have a limited life, estimated to be between 8 to 12 years depending on the nature and intensity of use and how well the turf has been installed and maintained. The earliest installations are only now reaching this age. Generally, just the carpet needs to be replaced providing the foundation has been well prepared in the first instance. Due to the cost of artificial turfs the location of these fields is an important consideration. Partnership opportunities, for example with schools, increase utilisation during the school hours and reduce pressures around cost recovery. Having these fields lit is a critical part of their effectiveness and utilisation, particularly through the winter.

Artificial fields do require specialised maintenance to ensure the turf fibres remain upright as they are designed to take the wear on the tip of the fibre. If the fibres flatten, they will be subject to more wear and can shred. An alternative to artificial turf is hybrid turf, which is based on natural grass fields

reinforced with artificial fibres. Fibres are woven into a backing material through which natural grass grows. Hybrid turfs are thought to extend the playing capacity of a sand-based field to around 25 hours per week, although this has yet to be proven on fields used for community sport in New Zealand.

Cost Considerations

Item	Soil-Based	Sand-Dressed	Sand-Based	Hybrid	Artificial
Earthworks	50,000	50,000	150,000	150,000	150,000 – 400,000
Construction	120,000	164,000	350,000	900,000	2,500,000
	798,000	1,064,700	1,604,700	2,054,700	1,050,000
Maintenance	(\$26,600 per annum/30 years)	(\$35,490 per annum/30 years)	(\$53,490 per annum/30 years)	(\$68,490 per annum/30 years)	(Based on \$35,000 per annum/30 years)
Water Costs ¹²	-	9,060	9,060	9,060	-
	50,000	50,000	500,000	2,620,000	1,820,000
Renewal & Disposal			(new sand layer, slits and turf grass establishment in Years 11 & 21 - \$250,000 per 10-year cycle)	(reinforcement, sand layer, turf grass establishment in Years 3,6,9,15,18,21,27,29) & new hybrid system in Years 12 & 24) + \$100,000 for disposal - \$50,000 per turf layer	(infill top up, worn turf renewal & infill in Years 11 & 21. Assumes shock pad renewal in Year 21). Based on full-sized rugby field.
30-Year Cost Subtotal¹³	1,018,000	1,328,700	2,604,700	5,724,700	5,520,000 – 5,820,000
Weekly Hours of Use	8	10	15	25	40
Winter Only Hours / 30 years	6,000	7,500	11,250	18,750	30,000
Life Cycle	30	30	30	30	30
Cost per Hour of Use (\$) – Winter Use Only	170	177	232	305	184-194
Annual Cost per Hour - Net Present Value of 0(\$) ¹⁴	107.52	-	160.22	-	140.61

¹² Water costs have been included to consider prospective water charges as part of Affordable Waters Reform.

¹³ 30-Year Cost Subtotal excludes water costs and earthworks.

¹⁴ Calculated via Sport New Zealand's Whole of Life Calculator with updated values as outlined above (with 5% Real Discount Rate as per Treasury guideline and shock pad inclusion)

Waikato Sub-Regional Artificial Turf Study (Visitor Solutions, 2023)

Due to the above financial considerations, councils should consider whether:

- 1) An artificial turf aligns with Councils strategic approach to sports field provision
- 2) Artificial turf is supported by a codes NSO and RSO
- 3) Council can articulate why or why not an artificial turf should be part of councils core field network
- 4) Negotiables and non-negotiables if considering a capital or operational partnership (or when considering allowing a turf to be located on Council managed land). Covering areas such as:
 - a. The minimum number of community hours Council is purchasing for its investment.
 - b. How important is it that the design and location of the turf follows best practice.
 - c. How much operational funding should each partner pay.
 - d. What obligations will each partner have for longer term renewals (how much will each contribute).
 - e. How will bookings be handled.
 - f. What will the term of any agreements be for.
- 5) What will happen if the entity owning or managing a turf cease to operate and the turf is on Council managed land.

Climate Considerations

Rainfall is departing from historic norms and becoming more variable due to climate change. This places stress on the soil and sand-based field network (again reducing supply at certain times). Waikato sport parks are susceptible to this with several locations based on an underlying peat base making it extremely difficult to establish and maintain good quality soil, sand dressed and sand carpeted surfaces without significant investment. While in the summer, reduction in water supply makes it difficult to maintain grass cover supporting the cause for further investigation into hybrid or artificial turf surfaces (Sub-Regional Artificial Turf Study, 2023).

Lighting

Care needs to be taken to align the delivering of network lighting with field quality. To maximise network outcomes, it is recommended that **lighting should be developed on fields or training areas with sand**

carpeting. It should be noted Auckland Council now have a policy to only light sand carpeted fields to maximise use, achieve investment value, and protect the networks' soil and sand dressed fields from overuse (which lighting inevitability brings).

Supply

Playing fields have considerable flexibility as markings can be easily changed to cater for different field sports. This makes them responsive to changing demand. Modelling of over 350 sport fields sites across the region indicate that there is enough supply. However, it is the **quality of the supply that creates field stress and perceived shortfalls in capacity.**

A number of clubs have developed and own facilities, clubrooms and floodlights, which can restrict the ability for specific fields to be re-allocated between codes as the club has a sense of ownership of the fields. This can restrict the ability of other codes (winter and summer) to access and use fields which may be underutilised.

Where opportunities arise through new field development, lease renewals and investment in facilities, user agreements should be reviewed with **Councils taking a lead role in management and operation of the fields network.** With around ¼ of the regional sites being school locations, **opportunities exist for partnership agreements between sport organisations and schools especially where they have existing assets (cricket wickets) or high school participation numbers.**

Analysis and Insights

- A number of playing fields are owned by council therefore council should take a lead role in management and operation of the fields network.
- A key challenge is the large amount of activity focused on a small number of fields often shared between multiple codes with demand identified on the same days of the week.
- There is a need to improve management of field utilisation by way of quality booking systems along with sport field enhancements and lighting opportunities to improve optimisation.
- As the number of sports field surface development options increase, so too has the level of service expectations from users
- Regional Sports Organisations and College Sport have a role to spread demand across the different competition formats using scheduling
- An optimal field network should contain a mix of all field types with artificial turf being consider across growth districts such as Hamilton and Waipā:

Hamilton's field network is likely to require three artificial turfs (at Marist Park, Gower Park and Korikori Park) in the near term due to factors such as, demand exceeding supply, climatic conditions impacting field condition and utilisation, and water availability restricting further field irrigation (Waikato Sub-Regional Artificial Turf Study 2023). Artificial turfs alone cannot address Hamilton's network needs. Soil, sand dressed and sand carpeted fields together with new grass types, maintenance optimisations, and support infrastructure such as lighting and toilets will also be required.

As identified in the artificial turf study Waipā's field network does not require an artificial turf currently. An artificial turf should only be considered once wider field optimisations have been achieved (such as achieving more coordinated and well-maintained fields). In the future the best location for an artificial turf in Waipā is likely to be at Tom Voyle Park ideally in partnership with Cambridge High school.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Sport Fields – Sport New Zealand Guidance Document for Sports Field Development](#)

[Sport Fields – Sport New Zealand Whole Life Cost Model Calculator](#)

[Sport Fields – Central Waikato Sub Regional Sports Field Study 2020](#)

[Sport Fields - Waikato Sub-Region Artificial Turf Study Report 2023](#)

[Sport Fields - Scott Point Sustainable Sports Park – Auckland City Council](#)

[Sport Fields – Recreation Aotearoa Low Carbon Parks Insights](#)

[Sport Fields – Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance](#)

[Sport Fields - Allocation and use of sporting facilities, grounds and pavilions – Merri-bek City Council](#)

- [Sport Fields – New Zealand Football, National Facilities Strategy Update 2016](#)
- [Sport Fields – NZ Rugby League Facilities Strategy 2015](#)
- [Sport Fields – Softball New Zealand National Facilities Plan 2018](#)
- [Sport Fields - Sport Park Floodlighting Project – Hamilton City](#)
- [Sport Fields - Northern Districts Cricket Facilities Assessment 2022](#)
- [Sport Fields/Parks - Five Characteristics of High-Quality Parks – Urban Land Institute](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Playing Fields.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City Council / Waikato District Council / Waipā District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rerun the field supply and demand modelling undertaken in 2020 to take account of updated field supply, sports membership data and population projections. ▪ Develop or upgrade sports fields to increase capacity in line with the recommendations of the Central Waikato Sub-Region Winter Sports Field Study (Global Leisure Group September 2020), and Waikato Artificial Turf Study (Visitor Solutions 2023). ▪ Encourage collaboration across users to support shared field usage maintaining a regional network approach in line with Waikato Regional Sport Transition Plan ▪ Support recommended land acquisition and identify partnership opportunities
SUPPLY / DEMAND	
Hamilton City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake a field network development plan to reflect the updated supply and demand modelling, best practice approaches and potential for three artificial turfs - Where possible all artificial turfs should be circa 1.5 full fields in size. Undertake a sports field operational and maintenance management plan (ideally in parallel with the field network development plan). ▪ Undertake feasibility analysis on the three identified artificial turf sites in the following order: Marist Park, Gower Park, and Korikori Park. ▪ Upon completion of the field supply and demand model and the field network development plan determine the need for additional rugby centric artificial turfs in the central and/or western areas and at the same time determine if and when any further football centric artificial turfs are required.
PLAN > DESIGN > BUILD	

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
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<p>Waipā District Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete leased park model of sport field allocation review. ▪ Undertake a field network upgrade / development plan to reflect the updated supply and demand modelling and best practice. ▪ Investigate how Council can optimise the field network and gain greater utilisation, in partnership with the district’s sports clubs, to achieve more coordinated, centralised booking and field allocations. ▪ Undertake master planning with prospective future provision for an artificial turf at Tom Voyle Park. Discussions with Cambridge High School are required for exploring future partnership opportunities.
<p>PLAN > DESIGN</p>	
<p>Waitomo, Ōtorohanga</p> <p>Thames- Coromandel, Hauraki (Ngatea)</p> <p>Waikato District</p> <p>Matamata-Piako</p> <p>Taupō District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete needs analysis, concept, and master planning of Centennial Park (Te Kuiti) and Island Reserve (Ōtorohanga) with a focus on sub-regional provision and avoidance of duplication across the neighbouring districts. ▪ Complete option analysis and business case in relation to Thames Sport Precinct following the need to relocate user groups from Rhodes Park. Develop the detailed functional and spatial requirements for sport precinct development with a lens on sub-regional provision and avoidance of duplication across the neighbouring districts (Ngatea) ▪ Continue masterplanning Munro Sport Park considering key users groups and applying a network approach across Tuakau and Bombay ▪ Continue to review implementation programme of Morrinsville Recreational Ground Masterplan alongside masterplan of Campbell Park. ▪ Continue to review implementation programme of Owen Deland Park Masterplan and associated facility requirements (refer to Community Hubs Section)
<p>All Councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and upgrade the provision, allocation, utilisation, quality and maintenance of sports fields based on current and future need ▪ Explore options to enhance existing infrastructure such as carparks, storage, toilets, shade/shelter, changing facilities and other activity spaces that encourage social connection, provide family friendly opportunities and assist with utilisation of existing sports fields where need identified. ▪ Increase capacity of fields through provision of targeted flood lighting, improved turf management or multiuse artificial turf (cost benefit required for each). Council to consider working with partner funders to provide a comprehensive, maintained and accessible network of floodlit facilities. ▪ Establish community/school use agreements to secure access to school fields where needed ▪ Ensure additional supply, where there are areas of community growth, complements and maintains a regional network approach.
<p>OPTIMISE / PARTNER</p>	

ATHLETICS VENUES AND TRACKS

Strategic Context

Athletics tracks and fields include both grass and synthetic athletic surfaces that provide for sports such as track running, throwing and jumping.

The National Athletics Facility Strategy (2010) is the overarching strategic document for athletic facilities. The Strategy determined that:

- Each region needs only one 8 lane, synthetic, and all-weather track, five of which will have IAAF Class II certification. The Waikato region is one of these five regions with Porritt Stadium a Class II level track.
- Continued relationships between National, Regional and Local athletics organisations and local authorities were recommended to maintain 8-lane synthetic tracks
- It is recommended that the maintenance and sustainability of the other existing athletics facilities in Waikato be continued

With athletics being provided in a range of settings (schools, clubs) and due to variety of athletic offerings, athletics is typically located and based at sites including larger sport park sites or schools that are well established to provide for multi-use recreational offerings. While hubs, such as Porritt Stadium have the functionality to offer non-competitive participation (use of the track) and as a training hub for other codes such as football.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Waikato Secondary School participation data (NZSSC 2022) highlights that **athletics participation has declined** by 83% (1143 participants) in secondary school aged children between 2019 and 2022 while there has been a decline across Tamariki and Rangatahi age groups between 2018 and 2021 (Active NZ 2021). For young people the peak age of participation is 12 – 14-year-olds with a gradual decline in participation as people age. Although there is a decline in participation, athletics remains a top 10 participation sport for Tamariki (number 5) and Rangatahi (number 6). Waikato adult participation is consistent at 1%, since 2018 (Active NZ 2021).

The Central Waikato Sub Regional Sports Field Study (2020) identified 10 athletics clubs in the central Waikato region with a total membership of 1,446. Regional participation remains static, however membership numbers reported by responding clubs have fallen by an average of 16% since 2019. Current participation highlights there is a minimum track time of between 1.5 to 2 hours required per week to enable a club to operate.

Current demand is projected to remain at a similar level by 2038 as the active population is not projected to change from the current level. It is estimated **there is sufficient capacity therefore adequate supply for athletics to meet projected future demand** through to 2038.

It is anticipated that current facilities have the potential to meet demand for at least 3,300 members (44 hours supply x 75 members per hour). This is based on each club having the ability to operate at potential utilisation level of 75 members per track hour and the current club bookings per week. Porritt Stadium, as the hub, has significant usage by school groups throughout the year.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Athletics, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Code	Participation Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Athletics					

Tamariki (5-11)	9%	8%	No data	12%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	14%	12%	No data	11%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			5%		
Adults	0%	0%	1%	1%	Static

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Athletics	227	-83%	↓1143 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Athletics (9 clubs responded)	506	-16%	Reported decline in membership number across all districts with the exception of Thames-Coromandel

Supply

The Waikato region currently has **16 athletic facilities, comprising one regional athletics facility** at Porritt Stadium (IAAF Class II certification) and the remainder are grass tracks. Some sites have more athletics facilities and/or other sport facilities while most have only grass playing fields or open grass spaces.

All sites upon which athletics tracks are located are reported as being owned by Council, as are many of the track facilities themselves. Additionally, a number of school facilities support the regional network and look to provide local community benefit.

During 2023-24 Porritt Stadium will undergo a track replacement. The community and general changing room facilities were upgraded in 2018. All other athletic track facilities remain grass tracks and have undergone planned asset management work. General upgrades such as field drainage, irrigation and changing rooms have been undertaken for several shared facilities although not specifically for athletics.

Some athletic facilities are home are multi-use venues and sites which are home to more than just athletics and can be considered sub-regional assets (such as Herries Park, Owen Delany Park, and Te Awamutu Sports Centre).

Analysis and Insights

- Athletics participation is not forecasted to grow
- There is sufficient capacity therefore adequate supply for athletics to meet projected future demand
- There is no need for increased regional hub supply with IAAF Class II certification

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Athletics – National Athletics Strategy 2010](#)

[Sport Fields – Central Waikato Sub Regional Sports Field Study 2020](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Athletics Tracks.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City Council PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Porritt Stadium synthetic track to IAAF Class II certification levels, and its support infrastructure to a national facility level standard.
All other councils OPTIMISE / PARTNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain existing spoke assets to community level facility standard to support the overall network of athletic assets including central hub of Porritt Stadium Where appropriate foster shared facilities for both field and ancillary amenities Explore partnerships with Secondary Schools where demand dictates

AQUATIC FACILITIES

Strategic Context

Swimming has been a popular pastime for New Zealanders for many years. One thing that has changed over this time though, is the way participation occurs. **There is now a wider range of swimming preferences that require a range of spaces across our aquatic network.** Swimming categories include relaxation, hydrotherapy, learn to swim, education, leisure, play, fitness, health, lane sports and deep-water sports. The size of pools, depth and relative warmth of pools all play an important part in determining what activities can occur.

The Waikato is home to many natural waterways, including rivers, streams, beaches and lakes. This highlights the importance of **water confidence and safety among people in the region, including of course, sufficient spaces and places to build these capabilities.** In 2022, the Waikato Region had the third highest drowning fatalities in New Zealand, and in 2023, the second highest (Water Safety New Zealand). Over a third of fatalities in 2022 (37%) occurred when swimming, 40% of fatalities occurred in rivers and 27% at beaches.

[The National Facilities Strategy for Aquatic Sports \(2013\)](#) and [Waikato Regional Aquatic Facility Plan \(Hutchinson et al. 2017\)](#) provides the overarching strategic documents for Waikato aquatic facilities. The national strategy is currently under review with a new strategy due for publication by Sport NZ in 2024.

Demand and Participation Analysis

The demand for aquatic provision is changing as participation needs change, with a **trend toward increased casual, informal and recreational participation.** In addition, the **Waikato Region** has an increasingly **aging population** which requires **flexible pool provision and access to warmer, covered, year-round water.**

Nationally, participation in competitive swimming has declined from around 6,000 participants to around 3,500 (Sub-Regional Aquatics Assessment, Visitor Solutions, 2023), while overall demand analysis highlighted a declining interest in swimming as a regular recreation activity and sport, although participation in swimming remains in the top 10 physical activities across all age groups (Active NZ, 2021). Participation is also changing with an increase in casual and informal recreation (breakdown of aquatic facilities participation reasoning - 36% youth (learn to swim), 23% fitness, 25% relaxation, 13% competition, 3% social), while **67% of total demand is summarised as leisure, play, relaxation, hydrotherapy, and school,** with only 17% learn to swim, education and 16% fitness, health and sport related participation.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in swimming, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Swimming					
Tamariki (5-11)	37%	37%	No data	42%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17)	24%	25%	No data	28%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			22%		
Adults	10%	6%	32%	14%	Decreased
Water polo or Flippa ball					
Tamariki (5-11)	0%	1%	No data	1%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	1%	1%	No data	3%	Static
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			1%		
Triathlon or Duathlon					
Tamariki (5-11)	3%	0%	No data	7%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	2%	0%	No data	5%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			2%		
Adults	0%	0%	1%	2%	Decreased
Aquafit/Aqua jogging					
Adults	0%	0%	0%	0%	Static
Diving					
Adults	0%	0%	0%	0%	Increased

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Swimming	307	-58%	↓417 students
Triathlon/Duathlon	42	-89%	↓324 students
Water Polo	293	8%	↑21 students
Diving	0	-100%	↓5 students
Underwater Hockey	0	-100%	↓3 students
Synchro Swimming	0	0%	N/A

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Swimming (9 clubs responded)	1624	-4.5%	Reported a decrease in membership numbers across the region except for Hamilton.

The Waikato Regional Aquatics Plan (2017) noted the following demand.

- 80-90% of demand is community-based non-competitive recreation
- Competition demand equates to 10-20% of total demand
- Learn to Swim continues to grow, especially as schools have moved away from providing learn to swim opportunities. Providing purpose designed and built space for learn to swim may be more financially astute than opting for multi-purpose design
- For the foreseeable future, the young (0-15 years) and older adults (50+ years) will be the primary targets for aquatic services. Flexible, adaptable and inclusive provision that caters to pre-schoolers, primary age, teens and the older population will be essential.

Regionally 11.7% of adults in the Waikato use indoor pools or aquatic centres, compared to 18.3% nationally. While 10.8% of adults use outdoor pools or aquatic centres, compared to 9.8% nationally. This highlights an imbalance in the network across the wider region, which creates opportunities when planning indoor aquatic provision.

Supply

The current National Facility Strategy for Aquatic Sports (2013) and Waikato Regional Aquatic Facility Plan (2017) outline a provision metric of 35 people per square metre of indoor water space. The National Aquatic Facility Strategy (due for completion in 2024) is currently under review and a revised provision metric has been indicated at 27 square metres of indoor water space per 1,000 people. This is a slightly lower level of provision compared to the previous metric. The new strategy highlights that there is enough event space across NZ to meet the demand for regional, national and international competition and events.

The Waikato Regional Aquatics Plan (2017), contains the most up to date audit of aquatic facilities for the Waikato region. The plan identifies facilities ranging from large multi-use/multi-purpose complexes,

mid-sized aquatic centres and local (indoor and outdoor) community pools. Most of these facilities are Council owned and managed. However, some are Council owned and externally managed, school owned and managed, or independently owned and managed.

The above studies outline that the region has **251 aquatic facilities, and 44,218m² of water space**. These facilities include: 24 Community Pools, a mix of council owned and community/school partnerships. There are an addition 227 school pools which contribute to provision for tamariki and rangatahi but do not provide publicly accessible water space. In total the **Waikato has 13,026 of full time equivalent (FTE) water space** (refer to benchmarks on next page).

Two key themes were identified in the Regional Aquatics Plan that define the network.

1. The Waikato has **an ageing network of pools** with the average age of a community pool identified as 40 years old. The network of school pools is older with an average age of 54 years. The National Facilities Strategy for Aquatic Sports (2013) identified that pools over 45 years old are considered a high risk to the overall network. The age of the regional network therefore raises a significant concern over its long-term security due to the aging infrastructure.
2. Regionally **provision of year-round indoor pool space is currently limited** to 6 community pools which provide 5,221m² of accessible water space (80.7 residents per m²). The Waikato region is identified as having significantly lower provision than the national provincial average of 35 residents per m² and urban average of 45 residents per m² and a significant under-supply of quality flexible indoor water provision.

The plan identified current levels of projected population growth and static supply of pool space will result in an extremely high ratio of over 104.3 residents per sqm of year-round publicly accessible water space. **Significant population growth in areas without existing provision are exacerbating the current shortfall of aquatic facilities (e.g., Hamilton City).**

Regional data on supply highlights an imbalanced network of facilities with an **over-supply of cooler temperature and lane (rectangular) water space and an under-supply of leisure, play, relaxation, and hydrotherapy water space, with limited flexibility to meet changing demand**. As a rule, the proportion of a typical community aquatic facility should be around 40%-50% lane space and 50%-60% other types of water by area to meet the needs of the different types of users (RSL Aquatic Options Analysis, 2023). An aging population will lead to more demand for warm water facilities and a requirement for facilities that are warm, accessible and with good acoustics. It is simply not a matter of converting spaces from 'lane space' to 'other types of water' as there is a need for additional water space.

In addition, a number of private pools are provided in the region. This includes private swim school facilities and pools as part of commercial gym facilities or rest homes. Not all councils have collected inventory data on these assets given their commercial focus. These facilities provide some additional aquatic capacity beyond the public network. It is useful to be aware of the potential opportunity in addition to community and school pools, given the declining number of school pools and an aging population.

Benchmark

The [\(National Aquatic Facilities Strategy \(Sport New Zealand, 2024\)\)](#) is the overarching strategic document for aquatic spaces. The strategy indicates that supply should be measured on a basis of 27 square metres of indoor water space per 1,000 people. Based on this benchmark, the **Waikato required 13,186m² of additional FTE pool space in 2023, and 14,517m² by 2038**.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) pools are calculated via the following metrics:

- Fully Available Community Pool (Indoor) = 1 FTE
- Fully Available Community Pool (Outdoor) = 0.4 FTE
- School Pool - with public availability (Indoor) = 0.5 FTE
- School Pool - with public availability (Outdoor) = 0.1 FTE
- Private Swim School Facilities = 0.5 FTE
- Event Capable Facility (Regional Facility) = 1 FTE
- No Community Available Pool (Private) = 0 FTE

To note, this national benchmark and regional analysis of FTE does not go into district specific analysis as per the Regional Aquatics Plan (2017) and therefore both strategies should be assessed together when determining district provision.

Optimisation

With the current fiscal strain and large volume of water space required to reach recommended benchmarks, the 2024 National Aquatics Strategy highlights the following approaches to create or increase flexibility of spaces for community sport and recreation:

- 1) Convert – repurpose and upgrade suitable pools (temperature, enclose)
- 2) Optimise - where practical extend life and/or expand water space at suitable facilities to meet this unmet demand
- 3) Rationalise – replace facilities with new facility to better meet this demand
- 4) Gap filling - where no existing facility, build a new facility

The strategy also highlights the following approaches need to be taken:

- Better use/access to what we have
- Government led/directed partnership to access pools
- Suitable and strategic school pools (Sport NZ – MOE as implementers)

Analysis and Insights

The Regional Community Survey (2022) completed by Sport Waikato highlighted that there were strong dissatisfaction ratings in the following districts around Aquatic Provision:

- Hamilton City (17%)
- Thames-Coromandel (37%)
- Hauraki (38%)
- Matamata-Piako (52%)
- Ōtorohanga (29%)

While South Waikato residents highlighted that they wanted increased access opportunities at Tokoroa Pool.

Any new network provision, including refurbishments, will need to cater for a diverse and aging population and a wider range of motivations, including need for flexible spaces, flexible programming, warmer water, warmer changing facilities and income generating activities (e.g., fitness and activity rooms and inflatable play provision). A review of aquatic facility demand across the country highlights the importance of facility design to meet participation preferences including (Aquatic Options Analysis, RSL 2023):

- Zero depth play spaces for young children to experience water play
- Hydrotherapy pools, particularly for rehabilitation and the elderly
- Spa pools and saunas for relaxation and therapy
- Progression from outdoor seasonal pools to indoor year-round provision
- Larger aquatic facilities for effectiveness and efficiency, complemented by satellite venues.
- Flexibility in spaces e.g. 2 x 25m pools or a bulkhead system rather than a single 50m pool.
- Movable floors to adjust the required depth for various user groups
- Leisure pools – wave pools, play spaces, lazy rivers
- Lighter, warmer and more accessible pools
- On-site provision of other services such as cafes, creches, physiotherapy and other medical services.

By factoring in these water spaces, aquatic facilities are more likely to receive repeat visitation to assist the facilities in reaching the **national benchmark of between 5-7 visits per head of population.**

At a District level, to ensure adequate future provision each council must:

- **Explore the condition of their existing network**
- **Understand their participation profile including visits per head of population**

- Understand what their assets are catering for against the 40-50% lane space and 50-60% other types
- Understand current FTE in their district against new national benchmarks

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Aquatics - The Social, Health and Economic Value of the Australian National Aquatic Industry](#)
[Aquatics - The National Facilities Strategy for Aquatic Sports \(2013\)](#)
[Aquatics – The National Aquatics Facilities Strategy \(2024\)](#)
[Aquatics - Waikato Regional Aquatic Facility Plan \(2017\)](#)
[Aquatics – Hamilton Options Analysis Report, RSL \(2023\)](#)
[Aquatic – Thames Aquatics Feasibility Report, Visitor Solutions \(2023\)](#)
[Aquatics – Thames & Hauraki Sub-regional aquatics assessment, Visitor Solutions \(2023\)](#)
[Aquatics – Waikato Region Water Safety Strategy \(2023\)](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Aquatic.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete feasibility and business case studies for aquatic facility options identified in Options Analysis Report (2023). Develop the detailed functional and spatial requirements of the facility(s) based on facility mix considering the need for flexible water space, learn to swim and hydrotherapy provision to enable play, active recreation and sport • Continue to work in partnership with other facility providers to secure community access to a range of aquatic venues.
PLAN > DESIGN	
Thames-Coromandel District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise feasibility and business case detailing best aquatic facility solution and location considering sub-regional needs. Continue partnership with Hauraki District Council as part of the planning. • Develop the detailed functional and spatial requirements of the facility(s) based on facility mix. Consider need for flexible water space, learn to swim and hydrotherapy provision. • Thames Centennial Pool should be maintained until a replacement facility is developed. • Secure partnership funding for capital and ongoing operational investment and expenditure. • Construct new aquatic centre.
PLAN > DESIGN > BUILD	
Hauraki District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider potential partnerships and cross boundary collaboration opportunities, while needing to understand current aquatic asset conditions/reinvestment. Continue partnership with Thames Coromandel District for appropriate sub-regional pool planning.
CONCEPT > PLAN	
Waikato District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider sub regional partnership in the North East of Hamilton and South of Auckland to optimise provision
CONCEPT > PLAN	

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Matamata-Piako, Ōtorohanga, South Waikato, North Waikato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan for significant re-investment into existing indoor aquatic community facilities to ensure aquatic provision meets the needs of the wider sub-region community needs. Ensure indoor year-round provision is maintained. Consider need for flexible water space, learn to swim, hydrotherapy provision and district wide and sub-regional impact.
CONCEPT > PLAN	
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain existing operational pools based on asset management plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore partnerships with schools and tertiary institutions ○ Optimise and maintain existing assets - consider age and condition of pools prior to any upgrade/refurbishment ○ Investigate sub regional supply and cross boundary partnerships to continue network approach ▪ Conduct detailed assessment in areas where access to indoor water is significantly below the identified ratio (Waikato Regional Aquatics Plan – 2017). Identify key facilities to improve year-round access. Councils must:
MAINTAIN / OPTIMISE / PARTNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the condition and service provision of their existing network • Understand their participation profile including visits per head of population • Understand current FTE in their district against new national benchmarks ▪ Consider the need for regional aquatic study update following the completion of the updated National Strategy for Aquatic Sports.

WATER-BASED SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS

Strategic Context

The Waikato is home to many natural waterways, beaches, and lakes, many of which are home to assets that along with the presence of water contributes to play, active recreation and sporting opportunities. An audit identified several sites with water-based facilities spread across the Waikato region. The activities at these locations include, but are not limited to: rowing, canoe racing, kayaking, waka ama, dragon boating, sailing, surf lifesaving, water skiing, fishing, boating, water skiing and recreational swimming.

Some of these activities require facilities to support access to and use of the water including storage, and all require water quality suitable for recreational use. Live and trend information is publicly [available](#), with more information and regional direction to come from the **Waikato Regional Natural Bodies of Water Network Plan (2024)**.

Many water-based activities are also seasonal and are enjoyed by visitors to the region.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in water-based sports, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Rowing					
Tamariki (5-11)	0%	0%	No data	2%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17)	2%	2%	No data	4%	Static
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			2%		
Adults	1%	0%	2%	2%	Decreased
Canoeing or Kayaking					
Tamariki (5-11)	1%	2%	No data	8%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	2%	4%	No data	11%	Increased
Adults	1%	1%	13%	10%	Increased
Sailing or Yachting					
Tamariki (5-11)	1%	0%	2%	2%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	1%	1%	13%	10%	Static
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			5% - included water sports such as lifesaving		
Adults	0%	0%	0%	3%	Decreased

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Waka Ama					
Tamariki (5-11)	0%	0%	No data	2%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17)	0%	2%	No data	8%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			2%		
Adults	0%	0%	1%	2%	Decreased

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Rowing	832	28%	↑184 students
Waka Ama	145	-53%	↓166 students
Canoe Polo	8	-76%	↓25 students
Kayaking - Sprint	1	Kayaking (combined) - 92%	↓34 student
Kayaking - White Water	2		
Dragon Boating	19	100%	↑19 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Rowing (9 clubs responded)	594	-4.9%	N/A
Surf lifesaving (2 clubs responded)	338	+10%	N/A
Waka Ama (10 clubs responded)	461	-27%	N/A
Water Ski (2 clubs responded)	298	+10%	N/A
Canoeing or Kayaking (6 clubs responded)	146	N/A	N/A
Sailing or Yachting	N/A	N/A	Static membership in Waipā. Decline in membership in Hamilton and Thames. Increase in Mercury Bay (Coromandel)

Supply

Currently the Waikato region is home to a number of national and international facilities/environments such as the Mighty River Domain, Lake Karapiro home to Rowing New Zealand and Canoe Racing New Zealand. In addition, the region has a significant number of natural waterways including rivers, lakes and beaches. Key Sub-regional sites were identified in the audit they include:

- Waikato River – In particular access in Hamilton CBD for Waikato Rowing
- Piako River
- Lake Taupō

Analysis and Insights

Many water-based activities are also seasonal and are enjoyed by visitors to the region. While Rowing remains strong as a secondary school sport activity, overall membership is not representing growth. Key growth areas are across our rangatahi age groups with activities such as Waka Ama, Canoeing and Kayaking experiencing increase in participation

Based on regional analysis, there are enough assets across the region to continue to cater for a variety of play, active recreation and sporting opportunities now and into the future. Key focus areas include:

- Focus on accessibility and access by all at already established public areas – beaches, lakes
- Assets are maintained with a focus on quality provision over quantity
- A regional collective focus on enhancing water quality
- Ensuring facilities that are built are optimised and adequate storage provision is provided to support activities such as Waka Ama.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Water Based Sports Facilities - Waikato Natural Bodies of Water Network Plan \(2024\)](#)

[Water Based Sports Facilities – Ministry for Environment \(Freshwater Data\)](#)

[Aquatics – Waikato Region Water Safety Strategy \(2023\)](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Water based Sports.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	Endorse regional action plan following the development of the Waikato Regional Natural Bodies of Water Network Plan (2024) Subject to recommendations from the Waikato Regional Natural Bodies of Water Network Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain existing facilities and optimise where required ▪ Reinvestment into already established regional and international standard sites – i.e Mighty River Domain
STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure appropriate repair and maintenance plans exist to ensure the quality of facilities over the life of assets ▪ Utilise sub regional and national facilities as required
MAINTAIN / OPTMISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased water quality across the network to expand supply of aquatic environments for play, active recreation and sport

EQUESTRIAN

Strategic Context

Equestrian sport, like many others, has significantly changed over the years to meet the evolving needs of the participants, including the introduction of new sports and changes to their delivery. Equestrian includes the disciplines of show jumping, dressage, eventing, endurance, pony club, polo, polocrosse, riding for the disabled, horse racing and trotting. Equestrian Sports New Zealand (ESNZ) is the national sports organisation for equestrians in Aotearoa, New Zealand, while Zealand Pony Clubs Association (NZPCA) is a not for profit, youth voluntary organisation for young people interested in ponies/horses and riding. Throughout the Waikato Riding for Disabled (RDA) provides access and opportunity to people with disabilities and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Historically, private farmland and various showgrounds around the country have played host to shows and events. Over time, the landscape has changed, and with more use of council and code-specific use facilities. **Urban sprawl has also had a significant impact, consuming many facilities that were once on the city/town boundaries.**

The Waikato is a strong equestrian region, breeding many racing champions and home to a wide range of equestrian facilities including the Taupō National Equestrian Centre and Takapoto Estate in Cambridge, both of which are international/national level standard.

The Waikato region currently has 36 dedicated equestrian facilities, comprising international, national and a wide range of local private, public, and school-based facilities. Some sites have multi-purpose facilities to enable participation in several disciplines including dressage, show jumping, cross country, and polo cross, while several private facilities provide lessons or coaching.

The National Equestrian Facilities Strategy 2024 developed in collaboration between ESNZ and NZPCA, has highlighted the following challenges and opportunities for Equestrian along with a roadmap forward in relation to spaces and places:

Challenges

- Land pressure for alternative use (coupled with farmland decline)
- Aging assets and poor facilities conditions
- Security of tenure - current reliance on private landowners as they own 28% of primary equestrian sites, with 29% of sites raising concerns around security
- Environmental impacts including weather impacts/patterns
- Changing demographics which are impacting delivery
- Limited data to clearly demonstrate the value proposition for investing in equestrian activity
- Representation or input is often overlooked when exploring public space and trail opportunities

Opportunities

- Increasing trend for more casual use, riding schools
- Network approach - Wide geographic spread of equestrian sites
- Greater collaboration and connection between equestrian groups, advocacy groups and other key stakeholders (i.e. Councils, forestry owners and Department of Conservation).

Way Forward

- **Utilising our existing sites and facilities** (including privately owned)
- **Establish more partnerships** (across equine activity/sites and the wider community) to optimise use, including racing industry sites
- **Explore consolidation of sites** to reduce volunteer burden, increase site use (where practicable),
- **Prioritise planning and investment into equestrian sites** which play a critical role in the overall network and deliver the widest-reaching equestrian outcomes

Key to success is having **the right facilities in the right locations and providing participants and equine with quality experiences.** There is no need or demand to warrant the establishment of additional 'base equestrian sites'.

A review of the racing industry (NZTR Venue Plan) has identified New Zealand has surplus racetracks and a number of venues are tired, run down and not up to acceptable standard. The plan proposes to:

- Maintain a geographic balance of regional versus main centres
- Invest in customer facilities at selected venues where the on-course experience is important
- Retain tracks to provide and promote racing both locally and nationally

Demand and Participation Analysis

The Waikato region has the third largest equestrian membership base in the country and a higher-than-average ratio of members per 1,000 residents (National Equestrian Facilities Strategy 2024).

ESNZ and NZPCA membership nationwide totals 14,754, translating to 33,934 horses (average 2.3 horses per member). However when including wider participation activity there is an **estimated 49,000 equestrians in NZ, of which the Waikato is home to 5,199 equestrians with 1,787 being members (1,027 NZPCA, 760 ESNZ)**. The 2023 national strategy outlines an **expected growth of 23% by 2048 and a participation rate of 1% of the population**. The primary catchments for equestrian participation are the Waikato District (34% - relatively dispersed) and the Waipā District (22% - with a strong concentration in and around Cambridge). Taupō with 10% is the next highest area, with the remaining membership spread across the Waikato.

Nationally, membership has shown an overall decline over the last 5 years. However, this has stabilised over the last 3 years with the following breakdown:

- NZPCA membership decline (-14%)
- ESNZ membership growth (+3%)
- Membership is 92% female, with a relatively even age-distribution between children, youth and adults
- While 41% of ESNZ members are affiliated to more than one discipline, order of participation preference is as follows:
 - Showjumping 57%
 - Show hunting 48%
 - Dressage 46%
 - Eventing 30%
 - Endurance 5%

The 2024 Facilities Strategy highlighted that 29% of Waikato Pony Clubs saw an increase in membership numbers (vs 21% decrease), while 29 equestrian clubs who responded to the Sport Waikato Regional Club Survey (2022) highlighted an average of 36% membership growth since 2019.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Equestrian, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021).

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Horse riding (e.g. Pony club)					
Tamariki (5-11)	3%	3%	No data	13%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17)	2%	2%	No data	7%	Static
Adults	1%	1%	4%	5%	Static

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2019)	Change	Overall Shift
Equestrian	234	4%	↑10 students

Regional Club Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %
Horse riding/Equestrian (29 clubs responded)	1392	+36%

Supply

Status and Condition of Supply

The region plays a key event role across all disciplines and equestrian-activity. The national network of equestrian facilities, outlined in the 2024 Equestrian Facilities Strategy, highlights that most facilities are on land owned by Council and leased to clubs. While the majority of landownership sits with Council, **managing and maintaining facility assets is predominately borne by clubs/groups (70%)** with the majority of sites 30+ years in age (57%). The Waikato supply differs slightly with the **main landowner being private (46%)**, followed by councils (37%) and others such as A&P Societies (17%). Facility condition is however, in line with national site age averages with **56% of sites over the age of 30 years and perceived to be in average condition.**

The Waikato region currently has 36 dedicated equestrian facilities, while there are 62 sites where equestrian takes place, made up of the following:

- Dressage: 30 Sites
- Endurance: 4
- Eventing: 8
- Jumping & Showhunter: 20

63% of these sites have highlighted that they had available capacity, with 48% of these being all-weather arena solutions. However, 50% of these are considered in poor condition.

Hierarchy of Facilities include:

- **International** - High performance hubs through the National Equestrian Centres (Taupō)
- **National** - Premier facilities, located greater than 2-hours driving time from the NEC
- **Regional** - Hubbing and/or collocation of multiple equestrian clubs, groups, disciplines and/or sports. Can host up to regional level events (including premier and grand prix discipline events, located at least 2 hours' drive time from another tier 1, 2 or 3 site (Waikato Equestrian Centre). One per region
- **District** - Multi-use equestrian facility or collocation of multiple equestrian clubs, groups, disciplines and/or sports with at least one core user group. Service a district catchment size 30,000-40,000 population
- **Local** - RDA, Riding Clubs, Polo Facilities, Casual Use. To provision guidelines, typically located from a District or higher-tiered facility which may host events for the same discipline(s).

Two international/national facilities operate in the region, the National Equestrian Centre in Taupō and the privately owned Takapoto Estate Show jumping arena at Karapiro, while the Waikato Equestrian Centre in Hamilton is the regional home. **The three-tiered sites account for 75% of all scheduled events across the region (2022/23 season) for dressage, eventing and jumping.** A number of facilities are operated as trusts (such as the Kihikihi Polo Grounds), while St Peter's School in Cambridge owns an equestrian facility focused on show jumping, dressage and cross country.

Location of Participation

Nationally, as indicated in Sport NZ's Active NZ (2021) survey, the most popular public spaces where equestrian activity takes place included beaches (81%) and the roadside (68%), followed by forests (59%) and trails (54%). This differs across the Waikato Region with the National Equestrian Facilities Strategy (2024) highlighting the following breakdown of where equestrian activity by location:

- Beach: 25%
- Roadside: 22%
- Forest: 22%
- Bridle Trails: 20%
- Parks: 11%

The Equestrian Facilities Strategy highlighted that Waikato participants highlight strong levels of dissatisfaction of public spaces for equestrian pursuits with 40-42% and in particular sub-region of Central Waikato/Hamilton (46%) with participations highlighting the need for more dedicated spaces (South Waikato 59% and Central Waikato/Hamilton 66%)

Analysis and Insights

- There is **available capacity** within the equestrian network across all activity areas – 63% highlighted availability
- Large membership concentrations and a wide variety of equestrian-related activity is located in the Waikato
- Vast geographic spread with varying needs and demands, while some site optimisation appears evident (which needs to be further explored).
- Various tenure concerns exist across the region. Of note is the Waikato Equestrian Centre which is critical in the network (lease ends in 2032).
- The establishment and continued support of **Regional and District Equestrian Parks and other multi-use equestrian facilities are the preferred delivery models**
- Focus should be on **accessible, fit for purpose spaces that are optimised with a focus on equine welfare and increasing participation.**
- There is no requirement for additional National level sites

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Equestrian – National Equestrian Facility Plan 2023](#)

[Equestrian – NZTR Industry Reshaping Plan](#)

[Equestrian – NZTR Venue Plan 2019](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Equestrian.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Waikato Equestrian Facilities Plan which builds upon national-level insights. This should include taking a more in-depth view of current and proposed provision, consider activity within adjacent council boundaries, and incorporate a wide scope to fully understand other equestrian facility provision (including public spaces i.e. beaches, bridle trails and parks, along with private providers) and prioritised direction. Consideration should be given to undertaking the plan alongside Auckland’s Equestrian Facility Plan refresh. This is particularly relevant given the large concentration of equestrians in Franklin and Waikato District and the amount of cross-boundary activity. ▪ Utilise and optimise existing facilities across the network, monitoring demand ▪ Where appropriate foster shared use of facilities ▪ Explore partnerships with Secondary Schools where need identified ▪ Incorporate bridle trails in all cycling and walking tracks and trails planning (refer to tracks and trial recommendations) ▪ Continuation of regional solutions as part of the NZTR Venue Plan ▪ Maintain assets of national and international significance
Hamilton City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with Waikato Equestrian Centre to work through long term tenure options/viability under current lease arrangement. The site is critical to the overall equestrian network and decision-making around tenure will provide certainty given the imminent investment required.
CONCEPT > PLAN	

CYCLING

Strategic Context

The range of cycling related sports currently includes road cycling, track cycling, mountain biking and BMX as well as active recreation participation and active transport. These sports require easily available facilities, such as roads, and specialist sites including: pump tracks, BMX tracks, mountain bike trails and velodromes. Other forms of cycling that occur on tracks and trails are included in a separate chapter.

Cycling in the Olympics includes disciplines that use a velodrome, BMX tracks, mountain bike trails and roads.

The National Bike Facility Strategy (2010) is the overarching strategic document for bike facilities. The strategy identified that nationally:

- **Enhancement of access, increased awareness and optimisation of existing mountain biking tracks** should continue to be a major focus area.
- **No further BMX Supercross tracks were required based on population and demand;** however, individual cases could be made using geographical/access issues.

The Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy (2015), Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan (2021) and Waka Kotahi Cycling Action Plan (2023) all highlight a focus on creating safe, connected and attractive cycling networks with a focus on the following:

- delivering quick build cycle networks and building momentum for change in all our main urban centres
- supporting reallocation of existing street space to help growth of urban cycling networks.
- supporting investment in short trips to key destinations such as schools, town centres and public transport hubs in our investment priorities.
- A growing regional network of regional cycle trails

This supports better transport options for our people and contributes to meeting our climate change responsibilities under the national policy framework.

The Waka Kotahi Cycling Action Plan highlights that while the government's targeted NLTF (nation land transport programme) spend for cycling has increased substantially from just \$10m in 2012 to \$618m over the 2021-24 period, the walking and cycling activity class (which allocates NLTF funding for these activities) is frequently oversubscribed and therefore required strategic planning. This plan also highlights that a lack of safe and connected cycle networks across Aotearoa has created a large gap between the **small number of people who frequently cycle to meet their everyday travel needs, compared to the many who would love to**. Four times as many intermediate students would like to bike to school than the number who actually do. The Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy highlights the need to develop a network that **enables routes to be connected across territorial authority boundaries, to improve connections for long distance cycling and using rail corridors** where feasible.

Nga Haeranga, New Zealand Cycle Trails, along with Recreation Aotearoa have developed guidance to support trail developments with the core outcome to build a network of world-class cycle trails that would not only provide a safe and sustainable way to explore New Zealand's special places, but also generate lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for surrounding communities. This strategic vision is shared by Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission, who envision a comprehensive and safe network of tracks and trails across New Zealand.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Nationally New Zealand Secondary School Sports data (NZSSSC, 2022) indicates that between 2019 and 2022 there has been a decrease in all competitive cycling activity, however it remains the ninth most popular sport. In contrast **Active NZ (2021) data highlights that there is continual growth in cycling, biking and mountain biking across Tamariki and Rangatahi age groups across the region above national average**. Cycling/biking is number 4 (43%) in terms of activities participated in my Tamariki, while it is

number 1 in terms of sport at 44%. Similar trend across Rangatahi with cycling/biking ranking at number 5 (24%) when in reference to participation while as a sport it is ranked as number 1 with 25% of the population participating in this activity.

Although participation amongst adults is lower as an activity (8%) and sport (8%) cycling/biking is still ranked within the highly coming in at number 7 and number 1 respectively. Active NZ (2021) data highlights that from ages 35-50 years cycling participation increases above average participation amongst the adult population. Road cycling continues to be preferred activity to mountain biking expect for ages 25-29. BMX is only participated in by 1% of adults.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Cycling, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Cycling or biking					
Tamariki (5-11)	38%	44%	No data	37%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	27%	25%	No data	25%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			23%		
Adults (Road)	9%	7%	19%	6%	Decreased
Mountain biking					
Tamariki (5-11)	5%	6%	No data	14%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	0%	10%	No data	23%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			11%		
Adults	6%	4%	16%	8%	Decreased
BMX					
Adults	0%	0%	1%	1%	Increased

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Mountain Biking	200	-23%	↓60 students
Cycling - Road	81	-55%	↓100 students
Cycling - Track	78	-25%	↓26 students

Regional Club Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %
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BMX (2 clubs responded)	118	N/A
Mountain Biking (4 clubs responded)	214	N/A
Road Cycling (5 clubs responded)	1270	-6%

Supply

The diversity of settlements across the Waikato region, from large and relatively highly populated urban areas to small and isolated rural settlements, creates challenges for networked facility supply. Due to this diversity, walking and cycling play varying roles throughout the region. **Throughout the region there has been 47 sites identified as contributing to the cycling network.** These include:

- 9 BMX Tracks
- 7 Mountain Bike Tracks
- 5 Outdoor Velodrome
- 1 Indoor Velodrome
- 27 Pump Tracks (however it is acknowledged there could be more with recent developments)

BMX and Cycling Tracks

The majority of built cycling facilities are on Council owned land and operated by clubs on a lease. A small number are privately owned by individuals or trusts, such as Cougar Mountain Cycling Park. BMX clubs have been developed across the region and located in Cambridge, Hamilton, Paeroa, Te Awamutu and Te Kuiti.

The Grassroots Velodrome in Cambridge is situated on school land and provides for international cycling through to local level community use. The Grassroots Velodrome is the Home of Cycling New Zealand and its high-performance training centre however is an example of a multi-purpose facility by providing community facilities such as function spaces; community gym and onsite café.

Mountain Biking and Trails

[Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa](#), The Outdoor Access Commission, provides access to information around regional walking and cycling trails via [Pocket Maps](#) and [Plan My Walk](#) platforms. While [Nga Haeraenga](#) New Zealand Cycle Trails provides information around NZ cycling trails.

Refer to [Trails Section of the Plan](#) for further information and recommendation around trails.



Figure 9 Regional cycle trail network

Analysis and Insights

- Focus on creating safe, connected and attractive cycling networks
- Active NZ (2021) data highlights that there is continual growth in cycling, biking and mountain biking across Tamariki and Rangatahi age groups across the region above national average
- Active NZ (2021) data highlights that from ages 35-50 years cycling participation increases above average participation amongst the adult population.
- BMX is only participated in by 1% of adults
- No further BMX tracks are required
- Enhancement of access, increased awareness and optimisation of existing mountain biking tracks
- Enables routes to be connected across territorial authority boundaries to improved connections for long distance cycling and where feasible rail corridors should be considered – Refer to Trails Section of the Plan

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Cycling – Cycling New Zealand Strategic Plan](#)

[Cycling – Bike NZ Facilities Strategy 2010](#)

[Cycling - Waka Kotahi Cycling Action Plan 2023](#)

[Cycling – Bloomberg Initiative for Cycling Infrastructure](#)

[Cycling - Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy \(2015\)](#)

[Cycling - Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan \(2021\)](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Walking Access Strategy 2017 – 2022](#)

[Tracks and Trails – NZ Cycle Trail Design Guide](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Mountain Biking Trail Guidelines 2023 – Recreation Aotearoa](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Hauraki-Coromandel Biking Strategy 2022](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Waikato's best cycle trails for families – waikatonz.com](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Cycling.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain, optimise, and connect existing assets where demand warrants including tracks and trails in neighbouring Councils. ▪ Support the development of a connected, boundaryless regional cycling network and investigate opportunities where gaps are identified and need shown leveraging central government support through Regional Land Transport Plan and associated Waka Kotahi Cycling Plan with a focus on provision of more and safer cycling and walking infrastructure ▪ Continue to advocate for growth in cycling infrastructure, promotion, access and benefits through regionally led strategy such as Regional Land Transport Plan ▪ Integrate cycling and micromobility programmes and investment initiatives into other transport and land use plans, with key initiatives being outlined in Long Term Plans ▪ Promote and encourage walking and cycling for transport and leisure activities through neighbourhood accessibility plans and school travel plans. ▪ Develop and maintain safe and connected routes through the promotion of 'best practice' urban design (including CPTED) and engineering standards (including signage).
OPTIMISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support more Maaori and iwi-led solutions to increase the rates of cycling within Māori communities and across the region
ADVOCACY/ PROMOTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather better quality and more consistent data, including new counters that can differentiate between walking, cycling and scooter use, and accessing data from bikeshare and e-scooter programmes ▪ Monitor utilisation of existing outdoor velodromes and consider rationalisation at the end of each outdoor velodrome's asset lifecycle

SQUASH COURTS

Strategic Context

Traditionally squash court facilities are run by clubs, in stand-alone buildings on land owned by council. The **Squash New Zealand National Facility Strategy 2022** highlighted that squash is facing a current state where over **70% of affiliated squash facilities are over 40 years old and more than 60% are rated at average or less condition**. A 2021 survey of squash participants as part of the National Facility Strategy highlighted squash is under-delivering in the provision of warm, clean, quality courts, while many squash facilities are aging and poorly configured. It is increasingly challenging for clubs to maintain and upgrade their facilities with **72% of clubs owning their assets**.

Most squash clubs are run by passionate volunteers who oversee all aspects of provision, from coaching, court scheduling, inter-club competitions, tournament hosting, and facility management. The network of facilities in the Waikato spans across both the Waikato and Bay of Plenty competitions, with Bay of Plenty Squash utilises the Taupō and South Waikato venues.

Demand and Participation Analysis

The National Facility Strategy highlighted that national level membership growth has been 1% over the last seven years with **36% growth in leisure/casual participation highlighting the growing trend for 'spur-of-the-moment' or casual use** and many facilities are providing online booking systems and key cards to allow for this casual participation. 3% of adults participate in squash with the largest range of participants between the ages 25-49 (Active NZ 2021).

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (2022) data indicates that secondary school participant appetite for squash has decreased by 10% between 2019 and 2022 in the Waikato while overall regional participation (in the last 7 days) has been static at 1% across all ages. This contrasts with the Regional Club Survey (2022) which highlighted an increase of 10% during the same period, which is reflective of the 11% growth outlined in National Facility Strategy from 2017.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Squash, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021).

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Squash					
Tamariki (5-11)	1%	0%	No data	No data	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	1%	1%	No data	No data	Static
Adults	1%	1%	4%	4%	Decreased

Note: Participation statistics for the last 12 months is not included in the Active NZ Young People data set. Indicative results only – base size <30

Other codes that may use squash facilities to ensure facility optimisation experienced the following growth during the same period (Regional Club Survey 2022):

- Indoor Bowls: -13%
- Martial Arts: +10%
- Jujitsu: +3%

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2019)	Change	Overall Shift
Squash	243	-10%	↓26 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Squash (19 clubs responded)	1406	+10%	Increase membership in Hamilton, Waipā, Waitomo, Thames-Coromandel and Taupō. Decrease membership in Hauraki, Matamata-Piako, Ōtorohanga and Waikato DC. Mixed growth between social and competitive.

Supply

New Zealand National Facility Strategy 2022 outlines a benchmark of 40 affiliated members (28 rural) and/or 55 players (including causal) per court should be considered when accessing demand and supply pressure. The Waikato Region is on par with national average of 34 members per court, while overall participation ratio is above average suggesting that additional provision will be required in the future. Facilities across the region that are over capacity on membership benchmark includes Leamington (63), Lugton (81), Ruakura (53) Hamilton (44), Te Awamutu (62) and Morrinsville (45), while the following facilities have low member court ratios Huntly (16) Ngaruawahia (13), Tokoroa (16), Paeroa (11), Te Aroha (13), Aria (14), and Ōtorohanga (6).

Across New Zealand there 2.5 courts per facility, although it is much higher in the affiliated network with 3.0 courts per facility and 1.7 courts per facility in the unaffiliated network. In the Waikato there is 24 affiliated and 12 unaffiliated clubs with the national level facility located in Hamilton and regional level facility located in Cambridge along with 19 local clubs.

84% of the clubs in the region are over 40 years of age (vs national average of 69%), while of the 69 affiliated courts (23 unaffiliated) only 11 courts are glass backed, well below national averages. Only 5% of all courts across the region are 'excellent' quality highlighting the need to increase quality of supply.

Analysis and Insights

Squash New Zealand have indicated through their national strategy that there should be at least one affiliated court within 30 minutes' drive with a benchmark of 7,500 people per court (rural 5000, urban 8500) and that facilities should aim for 70% utilisation during peak times and 30% across the remaining 24-hour period.

While most affiliated squash facilities are stand-alone, 60% of all squash facilities (affiliated and unaffiliated) are in shared or multi-sport facilities.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Squash - Squash NZ National Facility Strategy 2022](#)

[Squash – Squash NZ Facility Development Guidelines](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Squash Courts.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton	Complete a detailed study to explore opportunities to raise the quality of squash court provision across Hamilton and consider whether new provision may be required in North-East of the City where there is high population growth and limited provision. Future provision needs to be carefully balanced to provide quality and accessible provision and continue to long-term sustainability. Consideration should be given to Eastlink Hub development potential.
CONCEPT > PLAN > DESIGN	
Te Awamutu	Continue exploration of hub development with Council. Carefully consider the number of courts required given the high current membership ratio. Consider opportunities for multi-use to support strong utilisation.
Matamata	Complete feasibility study and continue to explore community hub development to address quality issues. Carefully consider the number of courts required given the low current membership ratio and the impact on ongoing sustainability for the club. Consider opportunities for multi-use to support strong utilisation.
Huntly and Ngaruawahia	Work with the Clubs to investigate opportunities to raise the quality of squash court provision in Huntly and Ngaruawahia and consider whether optimisation may be an appropriate strategy, taking into account accessibility of provision. This exploration may be completed in associated with the Hamilton study of court provision and proposed reinvestment into Te Kauwhata Squash.
Taupō	Complete a feasibility study to investigate opportunities to raise the quality of squash court provision and improve membership through higher quality provision. Consider long-term sustainability as part of planning. Consideration should be given to Taupō Events Centre Masterplanning
CONCEPT > PLAN > DESIGN	
All Councils	Continue to support clubs with plans to upgrade facilities, or those with low facility quality or with low membership ratios to improve the quality of provision as a mechanism to grow participation. Any redevelopment will require a comprehensive feasibility study, including accurate demand analysis and mapping of current network and an understanding of national and regional participation trends. Co-location, multi-code use or partnering with other anchor tenants (including non-recreational use) will increase utilisation and sustainability. Rationalisation of assets may be required where costs outweigh benefits based on participation

GYMNASTICS

Strategic Context

Gymnastics is a collective of codes that includes, but is not limited to, aerobics, artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, and trampoline. Each code has specific facility requirements. The Gymsports National Facility Strategy (Jones et al. 2017) adopts a hierarchy to ensure a network of facilities is provided to meet future demand, avoiding duplication across the network.

The Gymsports National Facility Strategy 2017 indicates that 47% of clubs in the Waikato have shown growth in membership between 2012 and 2016, and **Waikato clubs have the 4th largest membership in New Zealand**. In some instances membership is constrained by facility provision, suggesting there is considerable potential to release more demand if facility capacity and accessibility can be enhanced.

Gymnastics is not a discipline that is typically practiced by adults, but it forms the basis of fundamental movement skills that enable other activities such as dance, yoga and individual and group exercise.

The national strategy highlights the following as facility definitions for regional and sub-regional assets:

Regional Club: A facility capable of accommodating year-round training at a more advanced level, whilst still maintaining a community focus and hosting regional events. Gymsports specific facility with equipment permanently set-up. These facilities can be accessed by a cross section of participants (from multiple clubs).

Sub-Regional Club: A facility with the ability to draw significant numbers of teams/competitors from across adjacent territorial authority boundaries for either competition or training purposes. Gymsports specific facility with equipment permanently set-up. These facilities can be accessed by a cross section of participants (from multiple clubs).

Hamilton City Gymnastics is currently defined as a sub-regional club.

Demand and Participation Analysis

The Gymsports National Facility Strategy (2017) outlined the Waikato requires a regional hub facility in Hamilton, a series of additional sub-regional hubs and the retention of a viable network of community facilities to support delivery. To achieve this will require proactive engagement with key stakeholders such as Councils and the MOE/Schools to explore long-term use/lease agreements and facility partnership approaches to secure quality access to facilities. This will need a thorough review of the sustainability of community facilities, and if required, changing the facility delivery approach.

Although Active NZ (2021) data highlights an overall decrease in participation, **Sport Waikato's Regional Club Survey (2022) highlights that membership growth has continued since the development of the national strategy with 10% growth** across the period of 2019 to 2021 which is already tracking ahead of the predicted growth for the region of 6.7% between 2013 and 2043 (Waikato Regional Gymsports Facility Plan 2018). Active NZ (2021) indicates that 11% of Tamariki (4th most popular sport) and 6% of Rangatahi participate, which is higher than the national average.

Currently membership is constrained by facility provision, suggesting there is considerable potential to release facility demand if facility capacity and accessibility can be enhanced. A combination of Hamilton's current capacity challenges and the population growth suggests growth of capacity within the Hamilton City (and the surrounding sub-region) should be a focus for the region.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Gymnastics, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2017)	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Gymnastics					
Tamariki (5-11)	11%	8%	No data	19%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	6%	3%	No data	5%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			4%		
Adults	0%	0%	1%	1%	Decreased

Note: Participation statistics for the last 12 months is not included in the Active NZ (2018) Young People data set. Indicative results only – base size <30

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Gymsports	22	-72%	↓56 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Gymnastics (8 clubs responded)	1620	+10%	Decrease in Hamilton Membership numbers due to facility capacity issues. Further decrease in Thames-Coromandel and South Waikato. Increase in membership in Matamata, Taupō, Waikato District and Waipā. Competitive membership strong in Hamilton, with Taupō, Waikato, and Matamata-Piako finding it difficult to continue to cater for competitive membership. All other districts operate via recreational memberships.

Supply

The Gymsport Waikato Facility Plan (2018) describes how Waikato clubs operate from a variety of building types including community halls, purpose built Gymsport facilities, school gyms, school halls, multi-use recreational facilities, and converted industrial buildings. Each of these facilities have different facility ownership and management arrangements. **Over half (53%) of Waikato clubs had temporary use arrangements for their facilities.** In those cases, the clubs were largely renting space in shared use facilities for fixed timeslots, requiring them to set-up and then pack-down their equipment for each use period. Conversely, **27% of clubs owned their facilities which is 11% above the national average and in some cases putting financial strain on clubs who are required to maintain these assets** with over half of club outline that current facilities do not meet the current need for their membership/community. With 7 clubs across the region signalling investment into new facilities, the clubs across the region will need to

work to investigate opportunities around scales of economy and working together around facility planning.

When compared with other indoor activities gymnastics' requirements for use and storage of equipment limits the use of shared facilities, with the national strategy outlining a preference for 'fit for purpose facilities'. Clubs sharing facilities have access issues and logistical challenges setting up, packing down and storing equipment. Equipment is a particularly important component of many of the gymnastic codes, particularly artistic gymnastics and trampoline. In addition, ceiling height and clearance from beams and other obstructions are a critical facility requirement.

Analysis and Insights

The Gymsports National Facility Strategy highlights that when considering supply and demand, capacity ratios of m2/person should not drop below the national average of 2.6. Across the Waikato region the average is 1.5 with extreme capacity pressure in Hamilton (below 1) and some capacity pressure evident in Waipā District.

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Gymnastics - Gymsports National Facility Strategy 2017](#)

[Gymnastics - Gymsport Waikato Facility Plan \(2018\)](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Gymnastics.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton, Waipā and Matamata-Piako PLAN > DESIGN > BUILD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamilton: Need to effectively meet current and future demand in both the north and south of the city with consideration given to delivery offerings for high deprivation areas Regional Hub: Need for a regional facility with complementary club or satellite venues across the sub-region (capacity levels, type of provision, code pathways). Determine the costs and benefits of alternative facility delivery models (outlined in 2018 Gymsport Plan) when assessing regional facility requirements. Consideration for regional hub should be explored as part of Eastlink masterplan in Hamilton with growth experience in neighbouring districts of Waikato, Waipā and Matamata.
All Councils MAINTAIN / PARTNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work proactively with key stakeholders such as Councils, other Gymsports Clubs and the MOE/Schools to explore long term use/lease agreements and facility partnership approaches to secure quality Gymsports access to facilities Maintain existing facilities in line with asset and maintenance plans. Prior to any major renewals or upgrades, undertake a needs and options If need is identified, undertake a feasibility and business case analysis prior to developing any new facilities/refurbishments. Monitor and review existing facility utilisation and quality to ensure Gymsports is optimised. Review and monitor the sustainability of community facilities. If required investigate changing the facility delivery approach. This will involve exploring the applicability of the different delivery models.

CLUBROOMS AND COMMUNITY HUBS

Introduction

Clubrooms across New Zealand are largely aged, and, in most instances, sites have been established for many years, with a variety of maintenance and asset development plans. They are traditionally used by clubs and are located on sports fields and outdoor courts. Often they are more than changing spaces – providing spaces for meetings, social events and equipment storage.

In the future, many clubs are likely to see the demographics of their community's change. For some this represents an opportunity, while for many this will increase the challenges they face as the pool of potential members decreases. For many clubs the burden of facility maintenance and costs of insurance are likely to increase as their clubrooms age.

Sport New Zealand have developed a [Sport and Recreation Hub Guide](#). The model sees clubs and community groups combine resources, using the same facilities to share cost, services and strategies. **Many clubs are under increasing financial pressure from reduced memberships and the burden of having to maintain existing or build new facilities.** The Hub model seeks to enable clubs to look for alternative delivery models and share ideas to better meet today's needs in an affordable and sustainable manner.

The Regional Club Survey (2022) highlighted that 131 organisations out of the 360 clubs who responded were planning capital investment projects, with 53% of all clubs reporting quality issues. 68% of respondents believe that current facilities meet their needs and this drops to 41% when thinking about future needs. A separate Regional Sporting Organisation Survey (2022) highlighted that RSO's they were across 16 development projects. The capital investment projects were grouped into the following:

- 45 related to new infrastructure
- 3 related to multi-purpose upgrades
- 29 related to experience
- 25 related to improving functionality
- 25 related to general upgrades
- 1 for each of the following (optimisation/equipment/multi-purpose)

More than half (53%) of clubs were being used to their full potential, and 39% saying their clubs were not. More than half (58%) of clubs share their facilities with other clubs with **45% open to further collaboration in the future.**

Only 63% of the clubs 'make an effort' to ensure that their facilities are inclusive with a focus on optimisation by the entire community. With an increase in active recreation participation and move away from more traditional sports, sports that typically own clubrooms need to focus on programming and optimisation initiatives using greater community engagement to ensure these assets continue to serve the community for years to come.

Demand and Participation Analysis

There is no applicable National or Regional Facility Strategy for club room facilities. Overall, there is a **developing national trend towards shared club room facilities where, if capacity allows, multiple sports codes share a facility (hub).** This is often driven by financial sustainability concerns and to optimise returns on capital investment.

Supply

There are more than 350 clubrooms across the Waikato Region with approximately two thirds located adjacent to sport parks, or as part of wider network of bowls, croquet, golf course and squash facilities.

A large percentage clubrooms are located on Council owned sites, and can present a potential liability for Councils should the clubs cease to operate or be unable to maintain their built assets. There is a collective benefit to optimising facility use.

Clubrooms are used predominately by sports field or court users with the majority used by single codes including: rugby, rugby league, football, cricket, touch, tennis, squash, bowls, golf, and netball. A number of clubrooms are basic single-club facilities – generally including changing rooms, toilets and a social room.

Sometimes clubrooms are utilised by more than one club (multi-use), or several different club room buildings are located at the same sports facility site (single-use but part of a hub). **A number of facilities are no longer in use or have been repurposed for non-sport purposes.**

Community facilities servicing all of the community will need to be considered when there is a need to develop new assets in locations of growth or across new sport park networks.

Analysis and Insights

- Many clubs are under increasing financial pressure from reduced memberships and the burden of having to maintain existing or build new facilities.
- 53% of all clubs reporting quality issues. 68% of respondents believe that current facilities meet their needs and this drops to 41% when thinking about future needs (Regional Club Survey 2022).
- 53% of clubs across the region highlighted that their clubs were being used to their full potential with 45% open to further collaboration in the future to optimise spaces (Regional Club Survey 2022).
- Only 63% of the clubs 'make an effort' to ensure that their facilities are inclusive, and this should be the key area of focus - Community facilities servicing all the community (Regional Club Survey 2022).

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Dashboard · Sport & Recreation Hub Guide by Sport New Zealand \(thehubguide.org.nz\)](#)

[Clubrooms – Best Practice Changing Rooms Guide](#)

[Clubrooms – NZ Rugby Club Workshop 2023](#)

[Tūrangitukua Park Community Facility – Tūrangī](#)

[Eastern Community Sport & Recreation Hub – Christchurch](#)

[Toitu Poneke Hub – Wellington](#)

[Fraser Park Sportsville - Lower Hutt | Home \(fpsportsville.org.nz\)](#)

[Kaitake Community Sports Hub - HOME \(kcsh.co.nz\)](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Club Rooms and Community Hubs.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
<p>Hamilton, Waipā, Waikato, Thames-Coromandel, Taupō</p> <p>CONCEPT > PLAN > DESIGN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake needs assessment and concept planning for the development of new community hub facilities (which may include the repurposing of existing assets) at key locations where sport field masterplanning is proposed to take place or where there is the development of new sport parks. Locations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hamilton North (Korikori Park), Hamilton South (Gower Park/Peacocks) ○ Cambridge (Cambridge Town Belt, Memorial Park) ○ Thames – In conjunction with sport precinct planning at Thames considering Ngtea/Hugh Hayward offering ○ Pokeno (Munro Sports Block) – considering the impact of proposal in neighbouring Tuakau and Bombay ○ Waikato District (Te Kowhai and Rugby League Sport and Cultural Hub) - considering the impact of any proposed development at Hopuhopu. ○ Taupō (Owen Delany Park) – Include review for indoor community sport facility accommodating indoor cricket nets
<p>All Councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage with clubs and facility owners to ensure that they have asset management plans in place. ▪ Carry out an independent building condition assessment on buildings over 20 years old before committing any significant capital investment into clubrooms ▪ Undertake quantity survey of refurbishment/repair costs and a cost benefit analysis and/or sustainability/feasibility analysis scaled appropriately to the capital investment being considered ▪ Where justified rationalise clubrooms (especially in areas of static growth and where there are duplication in asset – i.e kitchen facilities) or if need exists consider facility replacement or refurbishment of existing to meet needs of community organisations. ▪ Optimisation - If capacity of the clubrooms allows look to co-locate codes and utilise a multisport/hub model including non-recreational users ▪ Ensure clubrooms have a focus on inclusive access – refer to inclusive and accessible spaces and places section of strategy ▪ Encourage co-use of existing assets and/or amalgamation of clubs when warranted, supporting clubs and community groups to combine resources to share cost, services and facilities – refer to Sport NZ Hubbing Guide for guidance

BOWLING, CROQUET, PENTANQUE

Strategic Context

The future of Bowling Clubs is directly related to the provision of good quality off-green facilities that will provide for lawn bowlers and other sports and community activities / groups (Bowls New Zealand Facilities Plan). Whilst most existing clubs and their members are generally being serviced at the level to which they have become accustomed, the future of the game relies on facilities and club management solutions being provided to a standard that will attract and retain new compatible user groups and activities. Bowls New Zealand supports the future of the small bowling club that adopts a plan to become a local facility that delivers a diverse range of activities (including lawn bowls) into its community.

Over the past 13 years, it has been evident that many clubs have diversified their offering to the local community. This is reflected in the **growth of bowling clubs' casual participation numbers**, which have grown from 53,352 in 2010 to 95,046 in 2023 however this coincides with a **reduction in bowling clubs** during the same period (583 to 465) – Bowls New Zealand Facilities Plan (2023). Post covid participation has seen a decline in bowls participants nationally by 7,000 which is reflective of the membership decline across clubs in the Waikato region between 2019 and 2022 highlighted in the Regional Club Survey (2022)

Anecdotal evidence shows growth in the number and variety of community groups using bowling clubs as a 'home base'; e.g. Bingo, Darts, Croquet, Pool, Snooker, RSA, Dance, Fishing and Petanque.

The Bowls New Zealand Facilities Plan 2020-2030 (updated May 2023) outlines the future of **bowling clubs need to become 'community facilities FIRST and bowling facilities SECOND'**, with clubs needing to ensure they are set up to embrace this change and provide the 'new bowlers' with a product and service that reflects the expectations of bowling communities in 2023 and beyond.

Bowls NZ highlighting that clubs should consider the following facility initiatives:

- New 'see-through' fences to replace old, tired, solid fencing
- Modern signage promoting the clubs' community offering
- An all-year-round covered (enclosed) bowls playing surface
- Additional club equipment, for the likes of indoor bowls, pétanque, snooker, darts, etc.
- Modernising the bar and lounge in look as well as product and service
- Subleasing the commercial kitchen to a café or contractor
- Separate function room(s) for community hire
- Modern technology (TVs, AV system)
- Children's area

In 2021 Bowls New Zealand entered into a preferred supplier commercial agreement with FieldTurfNZ to install artificial greens with the cost ranging between \$300k - \$320k per green. Currently **artificial greens represent 25% of bowling clubs playing surfaces with Bowls New Zealand encouraging bowling clubs to create covered playing facilities as a growth opportunity.**

Demand and Participation Analysis

The outdoor green codes have been traditionally attractive to older adults. Changing sport participation patterns have reduced the popularity of bowls and croquet throughout New Zealand, resulting in many facilities being forced to close.

Active NZ (2021) survey indicates that 3% of adults play bowls, with membership remaining static, while very few young people playing. New short game initiatives such as, Bowls 3 Five, may encourage an increase in the casual, pay for play numbers. With an aging population across the region some of the smaller districts could see an increase in demand for outdoor greens and courts. A Croquet Waikato-King Country survey in 2023 highlighted that 88% of membership were above 65 years with 58% of that portion being female.

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Bowling, Croquet and Petanque, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021).

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Bowls - Outdoor					
Tamariki (5-11)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Rangatahi (12-17)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Adults	1%	1%	3%	3%	Static
Croquet					
Tamariki (5-11)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Rangatahi (12-17)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Adults	0%	0%	0%	0%	Increased
Petanque					
Tamariki (5-11)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Rangatahi (12-17)	No data	No data	No data	No data	Unknown
Adults	0%	No data	0%	0%	N/A

Note: Participation statistics for the last 12 months is not included in the Active NZ Young People data set.

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Bowls - Lawn	55	-24%	↓17 students
Croquet	0	-100%	↓10 students
Petanque	0	No data	No data

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Croquet (13 clubs responded)	728	+2.8%	Rise in social membership/participation and growth in Hamilton City and Matamata, Ōtorohanga and South Waikato Districts.
Indoor Bowls (10 clubs responded)	2256	-13%	Predominant membership is social play with a decrease in membership across all reported districts.
Outdoor Bowls (21 clubs responded)	1494	-2.5%	N/A

Supply

The audit undertaken for the 2021 plan identified a total of 62 specific lawn bowls, croquet and petanque facilities. Nationally 70% of bowling clubs sit on council land, the council has an existing commitment to the maintenance and development of these facilities for the benefit of the wider community. Most facilities were very similar in size and layout, with 1-2 greens and older clubroom facilities. Many included artificial greens. Several facilities also included greens managed to a higher 'Centre' level suitable for inter-zone/regional and national events (using Bowls New Zealand standards). All other greens at clubs were considered to be at 'Club' level for local play. Note that this status was based on current green standards which are subject to change if maintenance levels change.

The National Bowls Facility Strategy (2020) proposes that:

- **Bowls venues should preferably serve a population of 18,000, a catchment of 3km and an average membership of 187.** However, an exception is made for single community club
- There is an emphasis on adopting a partnership-oriented facility use model to facilitate efficient use of resources, including the rationalisation of venues and consider shared-use venues with compatible codes and community groups

A Croquet Waikato-King Country survey in 2023 asked clubs what they would like to see key focus areas for their clubs going forward with the following being suggested:

- **Increase membership for younger generation**
- **Maintaining/renovating assets**
- **A variety of versions of 'play'**

While one clubs wanted more lawn space (Ōtorohanga) which was reflective of their membership growth. There is currently fewer than 20 croquet clubs throughout the region.

Analysis and Insights

- Rise in Casual Membership over last decade however this has stabilised since Covid
- Bowling clubs should continue to focus on being 'community facilities FIRST and bowling facilities SECOND'
- With an aging population across the region some of the smaller districts could see an increase in demand greens that provide good quality off-green facilities and wider community service offering

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Bowling Facility Strategy 2023](#)

[Bowls NZ Facility Development Case Study – Naenae BC](#)

[Bowls NZ Facility Development Case Study – Stoke BC](#)

[Croquet – Waikato-King Country Club Survey 2023](#)

Proposed Approach

Facility Approach Bowling, Croquet, Petanque.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor and review utilisation, encourage partnerships and sharing of facilities where possible – refer to Sport NZ Hubbing Guide for guidance ▪ Encourage bowls clubs to explore the range of low-cost facility initiatives highlighted in the Bowls New Zealand facility strategy to try and grow participation. ▪ Rationalisation should be considered where demand does not exist or where mergers to create larger, more sustainable clubs are possible ▪ Support the redevelopment of outdoor greens to artificial greens where need is identified ▪ Explore alternative use of underutilised greens (eg beach volleyball, community gardens)

GOLF COURSES

Strategic Context

As an industry, golf clubs are currently experiencing a period of transition and clubs must manage multiple challenges including; changing societal and leisure habits, an aging demographic and increasing costs.

The New Zealand Golf's Strategic Plan (2020-2025) identifies that nationally over the past sixteen years, a steady decline in club membership has seen the erosion of 20% of the membership base (129,514 members in 2003 to 103,443 members in 2018).

To compound the membership challenge, the relative cost of participation for casual players has never been lower. **The low-cost barrier to participate as a casual player is exacerbating the transition of many club members to long term casual players.** Clubs are often challenged to deliver club membership entitlements and benefits alongside an attractive offering for casual players.

Many golf clubs are asset rich – owning the land and buildings – and cash poor. An estimated half of golf clubs in New Zealand are experiencing financial difficulties with some considering their long-term futures. A few clubs have needed to merge; some have relocated or closed.

Small clubs are relying heavily on volunteers to remain open and keep their course playable. Recruiting new volunteers is a challenge and succession planning is a major concern. To compound matters, the administration burden for clubs is increasing.

Demand and Participation Analysis

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (2022) data indicates national golf participation has increased by 42% since 2019, however this has just recuperated the participation decline in secondary school aged young people between 2015 and 2019.

Active NZ (2021) data indicates that across the board around 3% of people participate in golf on a regular basis with 6% of adults and 7% of young people expressing a desire to play golf over next 12 months.

The New Zealand Golf Waikato Regional Facilities Plan outlined that prior to Covid, traditional membership had been decreasing for the 5 years prior to 2019 with 9,700 members, however there was an increase in casual members to 7,483 at the same time. Since covid, membership numbers (both traditional and casual) has seen an average regional membership growth of 25% between 2019 and 2022 (Regional Club Survey 2022).

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation in Golf, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021).

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 months (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 12 months)
Golf					
Tamariki (5-11)	2%	2%	No data	10%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	3%	3%	No data	4%	Increased
Adults	5%	3%	12%	6%	Decreased

Note: Participation statistics for the last 12 months is not included in the Active NZ (2018) Young People data set . *Indicative results only – base size <100

Participation is relatively constant across age, with a decrease in the 75+ age group. In comparison only 2% of young people play golf.

New Zealand Secondary School Sports Census (NZSSSC 2022) – regional participation trends 2019-2022.

Code	Total Number of Participants (2022)	Change	Overall Shift
Golf	302	+42%	↑90 students

Regional Club Survey (2022), Regional Sport Organisation Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %	RSO Commentary
Golf (14 clubs responded)	4370	+25%	Growth in social participation and membership across all districts following covid with record increase in membership since 2020.

Supply

The New Zealand Golf's Strategic Plan (2020-2025) aims to develop a healthy, robust network of golf clubs and facilities that support future demand for golf in New Zealand. The plan has identified an oversupply of Golf Clubs in the wrong locations. **Golf courses are not necessarily located where demand exists and there are often multiple clubs in the same catchment areas competing for customers.** In addition, the population is urbanising and a number of previous vibrant rural towns with several golf courses are now facing stagnate, aging or declining populations and an oversupply of golf facilities.

New Zealand Golf's ambitions for facilities and clubs are by 2025 to have;

- 60% of golf clubs and facilities financially healthy with long term futures secured.
- The number of volunteers and paid positions in golf has increased.

Regionally the Waikato has 47 golf courses, making up 13% of New Zealand golf courses with 6 considered of national level or higher. These include:

- St Andrews (Hamilton)
- Taupō Golf Club
- Kinloch Golf Club
- Wairakei International
- The Dunes Golf Resort
- Tieke Golf Estate

73% of the regional golf courses were 18 holes with 66% of the total being rural clubs. The National Golf Facility Strategy highlighted that the Waikato had an average utilisation of 10% vs national of 13%

Analysis and Insights

- Membership growth in recent years had gone a long way to recuperating members lost over the last 20 years
- Majority growth is by casual participation occurring in off-peak times
- Golf courses are not necessarily located where demand exists and there are often multiple clubs in the same catchment areas competing for customers
- There are enough facilities across the regional network to cater for current and future membership catchment

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Golf Courses - New Zealand Golf's Strategic Plan \(2020-2025\)](#)

[Golf Courses – NZ Golf National Facility Strategy \(2013\)](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach Golf Courses.

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain existing assets where viable and sustainable ▪ Work with clubs on opportunities to expand and diversify the club offering including alternative forms of golf and colocation of compatible activities
MAINTAIN / PARTNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examine the potential for partnerships and amalgamations between golf clubs ▪ Examine the potential for closure of some smaller financially unsustainable golf courses

SKATEPARKS

Strategic Context

Skateparks continue to play an important role in the social fabric of our local communities and help to activate play and active recreation outcomes. **Skateparks typically are spaces that cater for scootering, skateboarding and rollerblading activities however can cater for other unstructured participation opportunities such as parkour.** With the inclusion of skateboarding in the Olympic Games along with the development of urban spaces catering for a variety of transport mode skate related activity is likely to continue to feature amongst the top activity types for our youth populations. Regional data via Active NZ (2021) highlighted an increase in skate related participation across Rangatahi age groups and while there has been a slight decrease in participation by Tamariki scootering remains in the top 10 activities participated in with 28% participating in this activity.

The Rangatahi Co-Design guideline developed by Sport NZ highlights the role these assets play in delivering community outcomes and how to get communities involved with the planning process of these spaces and places.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation through play, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 month (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 7 days)
Skateboarding					
Tamariki (5-11)	8%	5%	No data	12%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	3%	9%	No data	15%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			9%		
Adults	0%	0%	0%	0%	Decreased
Scootering					
Tamariki (5-11)	33%	28%	No data	23%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	8%	11%	No data	7%	Increased
Rollerblading					
Tamariki (5-11)	1%	4%	No data	11%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	0%	3%	No data	12%	Increased
Adult (skating)	No data	No data	0%	0%	Static

Supply

A regional local authority audit was conducted to identify skateparks. Note this iteration of the Plan does not categorise skatepark facilities using the WRASP facility hierarchy (i.e international, national, regional, sub-regional). Skateparks identified as indoor or outdoor skateparks and are considered local or destination if associated with destination play facilities.

Skateparks are typically co-located with playgrounds of which there are 466 playgrounds across the region. The [Skatepark Adoption Model](#) is used by Sport NZ when calculating 'skatepark need' which is **one 10,000-square-foot (930sqm) skatepark for every 25,000 residents.**

Analysis and Insights

- Scootering is ranked #8 most popular activity across Tamariki (28% of population) – Active NZ (2021)
- 11% of Rangatahi participate in scootering and 9% in skateboarding – Active NZ (2021)
- Considerations around future skatepark planning should occur alongside planning for destination spaces such as playgrounds and key locations which cater for a large volume of active recreation, typically across districts which will see large population growth – Hamilton, Waikato District, Waipā

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Co-designing Spaces and Places | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](#)

[Skateparks – Sport NZ Case Study: Alfred Cox Skatepark](#)

[Skatepark Project Guide – Skatepark Org](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach SKATEPARKS

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and/or enhance the skatepark network ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on optimising and maintaining existing assets ○ Focus on flexible, accessible and inclusive provision for all, including low participation groups and aging population ○ Exploration of accessibility to school network and facilitate a strategy to increase access ▪ Considerations around future skatepark planning should occur alongside planning for destination spaces such as playgrounds and key locations with cater for a large volume of active recreation, typically across districts which will see large population growth
MAINTAIN	
CONCEPT > PLAN	

PLAYGROUNDS AND PLAYABLE SPACES

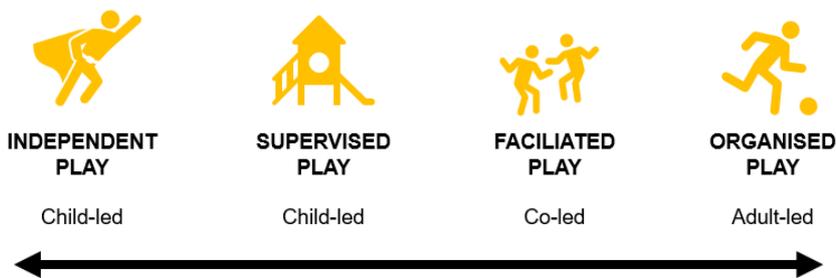
Strategic Context

Play is:

- **Intrinsically motivated** – it is spontaneous and will happen anywhere
- **Personally directed** – it has limited or no adult involvement
- **Freely chosen** – it is self-determined and has no pre-determined outcome
- **Fun, accessible, challenging, social and repeatable.**

Although play is defined as spontaneous, it does exist on a spectrum where there are different levels of play that children and adults might experience and/or engage in. For children the adults play various roles to organize, facilitate, supervise or permit children to play independently.

Types of play for young people Tamariki and Rangatahi



Play allows children to experience fun, joy and laughter in a way that is important to them. It's also where they develop and practice life skills.

The positive benefits of play include:

- being physically active in a fun way that develops fundamental movement skills
- encouraging self-directed creativity and innovation
- improving social and emotional connection
- improving a young person's understanding of their relationship with the physical environment
- improving resilience, independence and leadership by determining their own outcomes
- aiding better decision-making based around elements of challenge and risk.

Play is not restricted to an age group, and it is not "just" for children. Adults can play too, but it is a vital part of children's physical and cognitive development.

Tamariki are in the key formative years for the development of the attributes, of physical literacy, that encourages lifelong participation. Physical literacy refers to an individual's level of motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that affects how they value and choose to be physically active. A person's physical literacy evolves throughout their lifetime. For young people who are building and developing their physical literacy, quality play experiences that meet their holistic needs are vital.

Researchers suggest that there should be a change in the way we talk so that we discuss keeping children "as safe as necessary" not "as safe as possible"

More specifically in a **spaces and places context we need to consider the environmental impacts on play.** Including:

- Design of the built environment, [eg] streetscape, playgrounds and parks
- The existence and accessibility of natural environments including water, bushland and open space

Play is everyone's responsibility, this Plan focuses on play from an advocacy and built environment perspective, meaning the provision of play spaces and places, including playgrounds, skateparks/bowls and parks and open spaces.

[Play in New Zealand is under threat](#)

Play is a vital part of our tamariki's physical and cognitive development. It has been taken for granted that play has always been, and will always be, part of the childhoods of those growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, levels of play are in decline due to shifting values, increasingly sedentary lives, and changes in urbanisation resulting in fears about the safety of our tamariki.

As with many nations, there are several reasons for this, including:

Space: changes to both the built and natural environments have changed access to traditional play spaces (for example, streets and driveways are no longer considered play spaces)

Health and safety: parental and societal perceptions of young people's safety have changed when and where children can play

Societal changes: a need for instant satisfaction is challenging the journey of discovery learning through play.

Demand and Participation Analysis

Tamariki – Tamariki are most active when playing or hanging out with family or friends. 79% have been active by playing or hanging out with family or friends and 68% through playing on their own. The most frequent activities over the past 7 days include: playing on the playground (eg jungle gym) and playing (eg running around, climbing trees, make believe). 41% of Tamariki **do not** do enough physical activity to positively impact their health with 56% wanting to do more. **Tamariki highlighted that playing on the playground (21%) or play in general (20%) were activities they wanted to do more of** – Active NZ (2021)

Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation through play, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021).

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 month (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 7 days)
Playing on playground (e.g. jungle gym)					
Tamariki (5-11)	57%	51%	No data	21%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	13%	18%	No data	7%	Increased
Playing (e.g. running around, climbing trees, make-believe)					
Tamariki (5-11)	57%	54%	No data	20%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	20%	23%	No data	9%	Increased
Games (e.g. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)					
Tamariki (5-11)	38%	39%	No data	19%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	30%	39%	No data	19%	Increased
Playing games (e.g. with kids)					
Adults	15%	13%	No data	4%	Decreased

Participation in last 7 days for TAMARIKI (5 – 11 years)¹

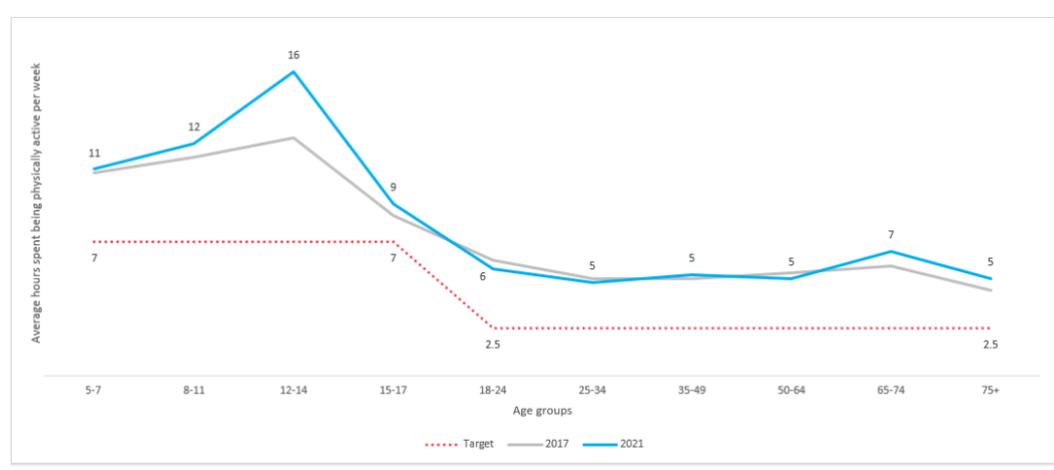
Note that swimming and cycling include recreational participation as well as competition through sport.

ACTIVITIES



Rangatahi - There is a significant decline in time spent, level of intensity and frequency of activity that occurs around age 15 and for most rangatahi this intensity will never recover across their lifetime. 42% of rangatahi **do not** do enough physical activity to positively impact their health with 74% wanting to do more.

Rangatahi are the most at-risk group of any age group when it comes to embedding and maintaining physical activity in their lives, play can assist. **Rangatahi are most active when playing or hanging out with family or friends (73%)** followed by PE or class at school (57%) – Active NZ (2021)



Participation in last 7 days for RANGATAHI (12 – 17 years)²

Note that swimming and cycling include recreational participation as well as competition through sport.

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES



Pakeke (Adults 18+) - Pakeke are more inclined to be active in individual informal physical activities such as walking (57%), gardening (25%) and running or jogging (20%). **Playing games with kids (13%) featured as one of the top 5 activities in the previous 7 days.** Adults are typically the instigator or director of play; therefore free play happens less frequently compared to children. 4% of adult respondents highlighted that they wanted to do more play related activities over next 12 months – Active NZ (2021)



Supply

A regional local authority audit was conducted to identify play spaces, for the purposes of this Plan, specifically playgrounds and skateparks. Note this iteration of the Plan does not categorise play facilities using the WRASP facility hierarchy (i.e international, national, regional, sub-regional). **Playgrounds are identified as destination or local playgrounds.**

The Waikato region has a total of 466 playgrounds and skateparks with 46 more facilities being identified since the 2021 plan with 18 of these spaces and places being new. Additional facilities that are commonly situated next to playgrounds include but are not limited to;

- Half basketball courts
- Skateparks
- Exercise/fitness equipment.

Analysis and Insights

The Regional Community Survey (2022) completed by Sport Waikato highlighted that there were strong dissatisfaction ratings in the following districts around Playground Provision:

- Waikato District (37%)
- Hauraki (40%)
- Matamata-Piako (43%)
- Waitomo (40%)
- 3 of the top 5 activities for Tamariki, 3 of the top 10 activities for Rangatahi and 1 of the top 5 activities for Adults are all play related activities

Considerations around future playground planning should occur alongside planning for destination spaces (via town concept planning an alike) and key locations which cater for a large volume of active recreation. **Districts which will see large population growth – Hamilton, Waikato District, Waipā, will need to strongly consider future play provision with all other districts will needing to maintain and re-invest into existing play assets with a focus on accessible spaces for all encouraging play.**

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Co-designing Spaces and Places | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](https://sportnz.org.nz)

[The Neighbourhood Play System | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](https://sportnz.org.nz)

[Recreation Aotearoa, Wild Play Series 2020](#)

[Sport NZ Play Principles \(2017\)](#)

[Playgrounds - Draft Playground Plan – Taupō](#)

[Playgrounds - Evaluation Tool to Measure Accessibility and Usability of Parks and Playgrounds. \(ana.org.nz\)](#)

[Playgrounds – Nature Playground: Hupara Playground \(Boffa Miskell\)](#)

[Playgrounds - Hupara Playground \(NZ Institute of Landscape Architects\)](#)

[Playgrounds - Magical Bridge Playground – Hamilton](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach PLAYGROUNDS AND PLAYABLE SPACES

Local Authority	Proposed Facility Approach
Hamilton City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to work in partnership with the Magical Bridge Trust for the delivery and build completion of the fully inclusive Magical Bridge Playground including stage two.
DESIGN > BUILD > OPERATE	
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and/or enhance the playground network ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on optimising and maintaining existing assets. ○ Focus on flexible, accessible, and inclusive provision for all, including low participation groups and aging population including adults play opportunities. ○ Exploration of accessibility to school network and facilitate a strategy to increase access ▪ Considerations around future playground planning should occur alongside planning for destination spaces (via town concept planning an alike) and key locations which cater for a large volume of active recreation. ▪ Where playgrounds are highlighted to be renewed, consideration for co-design of engaging age-appropriate play opportunities (inclusion of Adult Play)
MAINTAIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider 'play on the way' opportunities by incorporating play elements on footpaths and surrounding key community locations (schools, town centres, reserves, marae/churches)
CONCEPT > PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with NZTA (Waka Kotahi) to Identify community neighbourhoods where Play Street initiatives may increase or enhance safe play alongside positive social engagement. ▪ Undertake regional research on adult play and nature play opportunities.

TRACKS & TRAILS - WALKING, RECREATIONAL CYCLING & HORSE RIDING

Strategic Context

Active recreation includes all other forms of activity, other than sport, that require some level of physical exertion as a core element. It is undertaken by people for enjoyment in their own free time and may include indoor or outdoor activities including walking, recreational cycling and horse riding.

Described as generally non-competitive physical activities undertaken for the purpose of wellbeing and enjoyment, active recreation represents the greater component of community play, active recreation, and sport activity in New Zealand. Active recreation is generally flexible and allows people to participate in the way they want, when they want, where they want, and with whom they want – without commitment or obligation to others. For some, proximity or accessibility of opportunities is critical and shapes their activity choices.

The Regional Community Survey (2022) highlighted that **travel across the Waikato region for play, active recreation and sport participation is extremely common, with 70% suggesting they travel outside of their home districts to engage in physical activity, with 68% of those respondents indicating they do so for active recreation purposes.**

The [Waikato Regional Walking and Cycling Strategy](#) highlights that we need to develop a regional, connected network of trails with **routes connected across territorial authority boundaries to improved access opportunities for long distance cycling and, where feasible, rail corridors should be considered.**

Nga Haeranga, New Zealand Cycle Trails and Recreation Aotearoa have developed guidance to support trail developments with the core outcome to build a network of world-class cycle trails that would not only provide a safe and sustainable way to explore New Zealand's special places, but also generate lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for surrounding communities. This strategic vision is shared by Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission, who envision a comprehensive and safe network of tracks and trails across New Zealand.

For the purposes of this iteration of the Plan, tracks and trails are referred to as spaces and places for active recreation that include: running/walking, bridle trails and cycling - ***Note that there are separate sections that focus on facilities, spaces and places that support cycling and equestrian activity as a sport.***

Demand and Participation Analysis

Tamariki

Running and cycling or biking remain amongst the most frequent activities that tamariki participated in over the last 7 days. Home (77%) and at school (67%) were reported as the most common places for tamariki to undertake physical activity, with outdoor facilities (56%) and outdoor locations (46%) following in 3rd and 4th – Active NZ (2021)

Top 5 activities over the last 7 days for Tamariki

Participation in last 7 days for TAMARIKI (5 – 11 years)¹

Note that swimming and cycling include recreational participation as well as competition through sport.

ACTIVITIES



Waikato Tamariki (5-11), Rangatahi (12-17) and Adult (18+) participation through active recreation, Active NZ (2018) and Active NZ (2021). Voice of Rangatahi (2022) – participation outside of school.

Participation					
Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 month (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 7 days)
Running, jogging or cross country					
Tamariki (5-11)	52%	52%	No data	16%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	63%	63%	No data	40%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			25%		
Adult	19%	19%	36%	9%	Increased
Walking for fitness					
Tamariki (5-11)	16%	16%	No data	10%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	28%	28%	No data	19%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			26%		
Adult	55%	55%	84%	5%	Increased
Cycling or biking					
Tamariki (5-11)	39%	39%	No data	37%	Static
Rangatahi (12-17)	26%	26%	No data	25%	Increased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			23%		
Adults (Road Cycling)	7%	7%	19%	6%	Decreased

Code	Last 7 days (2018)	Last 7 days (2021)	Last 12 month (2018)	Next 12 months (2021)	Participation Summary (last 7 days)
Tramping or bush walks					
Tamariki (5-11)	12%	12%	No data	21%	Increased
Rangatahi (12-17)	10%	10%	No data	19%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			16%		
Adults (day tramp)	4%	4%	24%	16%	Decreased
Adults (overnight tramp)	0%	0%	5%	14%	Increased
Mountain biking					
Tamariki (5-11)	2%	2%	No data	14%	Decreased
Rangatahi (12-17)	6%	6%	No data	23%	Decreased
Voice of Rangatahi (last 12 months - 2022)			11%		
Adults	4%	4%	16%	8%	Decreased
BMX					
Adult	0%	0%	1%	1%	Static

Rangatahi

Running, walking and cycling are in the top 5 activities rangatahi have participated in over the last 7 days (insert reference). For many, walking, cycling, skateboarding or scootering offer an active transport option to and from school. Home (67%) and at school (62%) are the most common places for rangatahi to undertake physical activity, with outdoor facilities (58%) and outdoor locations (55%) following in 3rd and 4th, highlighting participation in youth across both Tamariki and Rangatahi is higher in more structured settings (school or at home) – Active NZ (2021)

Top 10 activities over the last 7 days for Rangatahi

Participation in last 7 days for RANGATAHI (12 – 17 years)²

Note that swimming and cycling include recreational participation as well as competition through sport.

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES



Pakeke (Adults (18+))

Adults (Pakeke) are more inclined to be active in individual informal physical activities – with walking, running and jogging included in top 5 activities participated in, while cycling is in the top ten for sports

and activities . Although participation in cycling amongst adults is lower than the youth age group, cycling/biking is still ranked highly as both an activity and preferred sport of choice. Of the 20% who participate in running/jogging, 49% highlighted that they prefer to undertake this activity at either an off-road track or beside waterways. This is still below the 63% who use roads/footpaths to undertake this activity – Active NZ (2021)

Top 5 sport and activities over the last 7 days for adults.



Regional Club Survey (2022) - 2019-2022 membership comparison

Code	Membership	Change %
BMX (2 clubs responded)	118	N/A
Horse riding/ Equestrian (29 clubs responded)	1392	+36%
Hunting (1 club responded)	526	24%
Mountain Biking (4 clubs responses)	214	N/A
Running (3 clubs responses)	169	+9%
Tramping (2 clubs responses)	50	+2%

Walking

Walking is the most popular activity for adults (pakeke) at 57%, compared to 37% for Rangatahi and 22% for Tamariki. The top places for adults participating in physical activity (including walking) are 64% on the road or footpath, 50% on a walkway, 33% public park, field or playground followed by off road tracks (24%) and beside waterways (25% river/stream, 18% by sea). Note that day and overnight tramps and mountain biking are all activities that are frequently participated in by adults – Active NZ (2021)

Cycling

35% of young people participate in some form of cycling, although this diminishes in later teenage years. Participation in the Waikato was higher (35%) than the national average. Young people mainly cycle or bike (32%) and only 7% mountain bike.

Active NZ (2021) data highlights that from ages 35-50 years cycling participation increases above average participation amongst the adult population, although participation percentages are much lower than young people. Road cycling continues to be preferred activity to mountain biking expect for ages 25-29. BMX is only participated in by 1% of adults.

Supply

Mountain Biking and Trails

[Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa](#), The Outdoor Access Commission, provides access to information around regional walking and cycling trails via [Pocket Maps](#) and [Plan My Walk](#) platforms. While, [Nga Haeraenga](#) New Zealand Cycle Trails provides information around NZ cycling trails.

The Waikato region has a total of 179 walkways, tracks and trails.

Walking

Most walking facilities, spaces and places reported in this plan (tracks and trails) are located on council or Department of Conservation land.

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission Ara Hikoī Aotearoa provides leadership on outdoor access issues and administers a national strategy on outdoor access, including tracks and trails (Walking Access Strategy 2017 – 2022). It maps outdoor access, provides information to the public, oversees a code of responsible conduct, helps to resolve disputes and negotiates new access.

Increasingly, the Commission is focussed on two different types of access;

- facilitating access across an obstacle e.g. access across a farm to reach a river for fishing, or into a plantation forest for deer stalking
- access to a facility or built opportunity to be active e.g. creating a track for walking, cycling, or horse-riding

Cycling

The majority of recreational cycling facilities, spaces and places related to tracks and trails are on Council or Department of Conservation land. A very small number are privately owned by individuals or trusts. Individual Councils and the [Waikato Walking Cycle Strategy](#) highlight localised track and trail requirements and peripheral infrastructure to support provision. Critical to the effectiveness of provision is a well-developed and connected regional network.

Analysis and Insights

The Regional Community Survey (2022) completed by Sport Waikato highlighted that there were strong dissatisfaction ratings for walkways in the following districts:

- Waikato District (38%)
- Waitomo (48%)
- South Waikato (22%)

Other statistics highlight the following:

- Active NZ (2021) data highlights that there is continual growth in cycling, biking and mountain biking across Tamariki and Rangatahi age groups across the region above national average
- Active NZ (2021) data highlights that from ages 35-50 years cycling participation increases above average participation amongst the adult population.
- Enhancement of access, increased awareness and optimisation of existing tracks and trails should be a focus
- Enables routes to be connected across territorial authority boundaries to improved connections for long distance cycling and where feasible rail corridors should be considered

Resources and Supporting Documentation

[Tracks and Trails - Walking Access Strategy 2017 – 2022](#)

[Tracks and Trails – NZ Cycle Trail Design Guide](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Mountain Biking Trail Guidelines 2023 – Recreation Aotearoa](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Hauraki-Coromandel Biking Strategy 2022](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Waikato's best cycle trails for families – waikatonz.com](#)

[Tracks and Trails – Your Coromandel Tracks and Trails Guide](#)

[Tracks and Trails – Harenga a Nuku – Trail Makers Advice and Resources](#)

[Tracks and Trails - Ngā Kaihanga Ara \(Public database of members of the NZ trailmakers network\)](#)
[Tracks and Trails - Collaboration amongst Local Trail Entities and Opportunities for the New Zealand Trail Ecosystem - Southern Eco Trails Trust](#)
[Tracks and Trails - All-Abilities Walking Track and TrailRider Guide – Parks Victoria](#)
[Tracks and Trails – Great Outdoors A Guide for Accessibility – Sport Ireland](#)

Proposed Approach

Proposed Approach - TRACKS AND TRAILS

Local Authority		Proposed Facility Approach
CONCEPT > PLAN > DESIGN	Hauraki, Thames-Coromandel, Matamata-Piako	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue exploration of extension of Hauraki Rail Trail (North, South and East to Waihi Beach)
	Waipā, South Waikato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore extension Te Awa Cycle Way (south to Waikato River Trails)
	Ōtorohanga, Waitomo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore Ōtorohanga and Waitomo Trail Connection opportunities connecting south to Timber Trail
All Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to invest into trails of national/regional significance with a focus on improving customer experience and maintaining/elevating status to 'Great Walks/Rides' – Hauraki Rail Trail, Waikato River Trail, Te Awa Cycle Way, Great Lakes Trail. Work alongside Nga Haeraenga and MBIE. Continue regional collaboration via regional cycling and walking steering group to explore opportunities to promote the region's walking and cycling routes and trails for visitors while exploring opportunities to connect regional cycle trails and to help realise full economic benefits of the regional cycle trail network. Work with Herenga a Nuku Aotearoa to develop a network map that provides a hierarchy of provision, reflecting access, proximity and challenge of each track and trail – through associated technology provider (Plan My Walk, Pocket Maps). Develop a connected, boundaryless cycling and walking network that links to other play, active recreation, and sport sites, leveraging central government support through Regional Land Transport Plan and associated Waka Kotahi Cycling Plan. Continue to support connections between the community and the natural environment – lakes, rivers, bush – for active recreation, including the provision of cycling, walking/running, and hiking trails and safe access to natural bodies of water Continue investment in development of cycling and walking tracks & trails where need is identified. Focus on optimising and maintaining existing assets. Focus on flexible, accessible and inclusive provision for all, including low participation groups and aging population taking into account Accessible Outdoors Guidelines developed by Recreation Aotearoa and Mountain Biking Trail Guidelines 2023. Consider bridal trials all cycling and walking tracks and trails planning taking into consideration national equestrian recommendations. Work with Athletics Waikato in exploring opportunities for cross-country courses across the region 	
OPTIMISE		
ADVOCATE / PROMOTE		

