



**SPORT WAIKATO'S SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE  
MATAMATA-PIAKO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Long Term Plan 2024-34**

**19 April 2024**

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## 1. ABOUT SPORT WAIKATO

Sport Waikato is one of 14 Regional Sports Trusts in Aotearoa/New Zealand, responsible for supporting Central Government and Sport New Zealand’s focus on getting more New Zealanders physically active. There is widespread and global evidence that physical activity enhances people’s physical, social, emotional, and mental health, educational outcomes and general wellbeing as well as making for a more cohesive society.

Founded in 1986, Sport Waikato’s vision is to have “**everyone out there and active**” so as to achieve a healthy, vibrant, physically active region through play, active recreation and sport.

### OUR APPROACH

Sport Waikato is guided by Moving Waikato – the region’s unified strategy for physical activity through play, active recreation and sport. The strategy seeks to prioritise partnerships with other key agencies to influence key outcomes, including to increase the provision of opportunities for both participation and quality experiences for the people of the region. We believe that by working together we can achieve the ultimate goal of 75% of all Waikato adults and young people meeting the physical activity guidelines by 2030, and therefore, a more healthy, well and physically active region.

Moving Waikato is guided by a Strategic Advisory Group comprising representation from Health, Education (primary, secondary and tertiary), Local Government, Iwi, Sport NZ and Sport Waikato. The strategy has three key pillars each providing a lens that gives direction on how we work: **Our People**, **Building Communities**, and **Regional Leadership**



We are now into Horizon 2 of Moving Waikato, following its launch in 2016 and subsequent successes, including significant developments in the collection of key insights, sector capability work, the Waikato Regional Sports Facilities Plan (now the Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan, which is in its 4th iteration), targeting participation among women and girls and the development of a regional cycle strategy. This next period (2024-2027) will see a focus on Rangatahi (12-17 years) and Tamariki (5-11 years) alongside specific commitment and attention to enabling participation among targeted populations, including: Māori; deprived communities; women and girls; disabled people and those with low participation levels and/or those who tend to miss out.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNCILS TO OUR APPROACH**

Councils play a key role in the work that Sport Waikato does and are an important partner and investor in enabling play, active recreation and sport to happen for people and communities. We wish to take a moment to thank Matamata Piako-District Council for their support of the work of Sport Waikato, whilst also acknowledging the immense fiscal pressure you are facing to both provide community infrastructure while keeping costs for communities affordable.

Sport Waikato is excited to work alongside you to continue to ensure a range of opportunities for people to engage in physical activity exists across Matamata-Piako. In particular, we look forward to providing support for the planning, investment, and operation of the facilities and open spaces which enable play, active recreation and sport, as well as increasing collaborative and cross-sectorial partnerships that open up opportunities for increased levels of movement.

## **2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

The Matamata-Piako District (not unlike the Waikato Region and Aotearoa/New Zealand as a whole) faces a number of challenges in the future that necessitate the use of a planned and collaborative approach to the delivery of opportunities for play, active recreation, and sport. Equally, there are many opportunities to entice and grow participation that can and should be realised.

The District population is just over 37,000. This population growth is up 5.6% from the last census in 2013 which shows growth in the number of New Zealanders calling Matamata-Piako their home. Within the Matamata-Piako District, we are likely to see continued population growth, the assumption is that there will be high growth in the District with population to increase to just over 48,000 by 2054.

On top of this, the demographic trends show that the population is aging. Indeed, along with the rest of New Zealand, Matamata-Piako's population is projected to age over the next 30 years. The number of youth (aged under 15) is projected to hold steady at around 7,500 until the late 2030s, and thereafter, gradually decline as a result of easing net migration, births, and population of childbearing age (a subset of the working age population). The population aged 65 years and older is projected to grow strongly, from 7,300 in 2019 to 11,800 in 2051, outnumbering youth throughout the projected period (Matamata-Piako District Council, 2020).

People identifying as Māori in the Matamata-Piako District comprise 17% of the district population, which is lower than the Waikato regional average of 24% but matches the national average of 17%. Overall, Matamata-Piako has a median income of \$32,400 p/a. Matamata-Piako communities cover a range of deprivation levels with most in medium deprivation range, while some communities are considered high deprivation areas. Almost half (41%) of the population live rurally.

Of course, a growing and aging population, areas of high deprivation and a significant number of rural residents presents challenges when thinking about providing for play, active recreation, and sport,

particularly when considering access and provision that meets the needs of a growing, changing and often rurally distanced community.

**THE VALUE OF PLAY, ACTIVE RECREATION AND SPORT**

In a 2018 study by Sport NZ, it was revealed that 92% of people believe being active keeps them physically fit and healthy, and helps relieve stress. A further 88% of people believed that sport and other physical activities provided them with opportunities to achieve and help build confidence, and 84% felt that sport brings people together while creating a sense of belonging. The vast majority of people (74%) also believed that sport helps to build vibrant and stimulating communities.

Of course, the benefits of physical activity through play, active recreation and sport are well documented and wide-reaching from physical health, to social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Indeed, a report on the *Social Return on Investment (SROI) of Recreational Physical Activity in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Sport NZ, October 2022) showed that recreational physical activity generates significant value for society across multiple wellbeing domains and outcomes. For every \$1 spent, there was a social return of \$2.12 to New Zealand, meaning that the value of the wellbeing outcomes for New Zealand is greater than the costs of providing these opportunities. While health outcomes are the most significant wellbeing domain for measuring the impact of sport and physical activity benefits to society, broader benefits were also *clear across several domains of wellbeing, including subjective wellbeing; income consumption and wealth; work, care and volunteering; family and friends; and safety*<sup>1</sup>.

**CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF PARTICIPATION IN MATAMATA-PIAKO**

Recent figures from Active NZ (2021) suggest that 60% of young people (5-17 years) and 51% of adults in the Matamata-Piako District do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing, with 69% of young people and 77% of adults suggesting they would like to do more physical activity than they currently do.

Active recreation and play are the preferred modes of physical activity for Matamata-Piako residents with activities such as running/jogging, games (e.g., four square, tag, bullrush, dodgeball), playing on playgrounds, cycling and playing (e.g., running around, climbing trees, make-believe) among the preferences for young people and walking, gardening, individual workouts with equipment, running/jogging and playing games (e.g. with kids) topping the list of preferred physical activities among adults.

### 3. OUR SUBMISSION ON YOUR PROPOSED LONG-TERM PLAN 2024-34

In our submission, we wish to comment on the following:

- 1. **Thank you:** On behalf of the people of Hamilton, Sport Waikato thank you for your investment contributions to play, active recreation and sport. Councils are key enablers of physical activity, and your effort and investment are noted and sincerely appreciated.

<sup>1</sup> There is more evidence required to better reflect the true value of the social cohesion dimension which is considered to be currently undervalued.

## 2. Our Recommendations:

### Playgrounds

**Sport Waikato supports funding outlined for playground projects** in the Long-Term planning, in particular, the investment outlined for destination playgrounds at central locations (Matamata and Te Aroha) where play assets are nearing the end of their life expectancy and require investment to meet the needs of the local community. We also support a district-wide approach to play investment, ensuring that there is equitable play provision.

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. Sport Waikato analysis highlights the following for Matamata-Piako residents:

- 33% of people within MPDC are using existing playgrounds
- Only 2% of playground users are either very or extremely satisfied with these spaces - the community have highlighted that playgrounds are out of date, too small, no options for 'all family play', and accessibility and safety issues are commonly cited as barriers
- Playgrounds have one of the highest levels of dissatisfaction across the Waikato, with 28% of our regional communities dissatisfied with playground provision. Across Matamata-Piako, this level of dissatisfaction is higher, with 43% of the community dissatisfied

### **Recommendation from Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan – Approach for all councils**

- *Maintain and/or enhance the playground network ensuring:*
  - *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)*

### Sport Ground Development

**Sport Waikato supports funding outlined for key sport and recreation grounds** in the Long-Term plan, in particular, the investment outlined for the following:

- *Continual development to Morrinsville Recreational Ground*
- *Te Aroha Domain Development*

Pressure is growing on field networks because of factors such as movement in winter and summer sports seasons (coming closer together and in some cases overlapping) and the growth in informal social play (outside of structured code play). Waikato sport parks are susceptible to poor condition in 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. There is a desire from the community to ensure that sport grounds have well-functioning amenities and supporting infrastructure that meets the needs of the community across our sport ground network. Sport Waikato analysis highlights the following for Matamata-Piako residents:

- 28% of the community are physically active at sport fields as a family (10% as individual), while this is 36% and 37% respectively for Parks and Reserves. 60% are physically active across these settings when including other outdoor facilities inclusive of courts and playgrounds.
- Community satisfaction with sport fields (21%) outweighs dissatisfaction levels (5%), however this contrasts with wider outdoor sports and recreational facilities which are commonly located at the recreational grounds (i.e courts) with dissatisfaction levels 20% vs satisfaction levels of 15%

Regionally, sport and recreational organisations have highlighted:

- 53% - facilities and spaces have quality issues
- 41% - facilities and spaces meet the needs of future communities
- Participants highlighted that improvement to clubrooms was the #1 priority for clubs, followed by amenities (toilets/changerooms) #2 and improved quality of provision (courts and fields) #3

**Recommendation from Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan – Approach for all councils**

- *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 multi-use 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*

**Morrinsville Pool**

**Sport Waikato acknowledges the following statement in the long-term plan and supports the subsequent outlined investment in the later years of the long-term plan** to ensure that districts continue to plan for and maintain aquatic provision:

- *The pool is nearing the end of its asset life and we'll be looking to upgrade/replace it, with planning starting in year four of this plan (2028/29). The pool upgrade will be a major project, and the community will have the chance to share their ideas and input into the design.*

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.

Regionally there is 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 and changing demographics (aging population and growth in young families). Sport Waikato analysis highlights the following for Matamata-Piako residents:

- Aquatic facilities are utilised by 20% of community as individuals within MPDC, 34% are used as a family
- Majority of issues are related to a lack of indoor and/or year-round use of aquatic space
- Aquatics facilities have one of the highest levels of dissatisfaction across the Waikato, with 29% of our regional communities dissatisfied with aquatic provision. Across Matamata-Piako, this level of dissatisfaction is higher, with 52% of the community dissatisfied

**Recommendation from Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan**

*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.*

*Maintain existing operational pools based on asset management plans.*

- *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*

**Matamata Stadium**

**Sport Waikato acknowledges and supports councils ongoing commitment and investment towards the Matamata Stadium Project.** This project has been a long time coming for the Matamata community and wider sub-region.



The proposed concept creates an opportunity that will benefit both the school and the wider community. School community partnerships enable facilities to be constructed with a wider range of spaces for the benefit of not only the school but also the wider community - allowing for a greater range of activities that meet the needs and abilities of all age groups.

It has been a pleasure to work alongside Council, the College, the Ministry of Education and the wider community in advancing this project.

**Recommendation from Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan – Approach for Matamata-Piako**  
*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.*

**Regional Connectivity Coordinator (East)**

Sport Waikato’s Regional Connectivity Coordinator team partner with all 10 Territorial Local Authorities across the greater Waikato region and this team includes a Coordinator who works across the Matamata-Piako, Hauraki and Thames-Coromandel districts. The Coordinators serve as support for Council technical staff across play, active recreation and sport projects, as well as conduits between the local sector and local government providing, support, advocacy and strategic leadership around investment and decision-making as well as the delivery of quality play, active recreation and sport opportunities.

We know some of the biggest issues and opportunities we have to support community and individual wellbeing through physical activity can only be tackled effectively when we all work together. Many of the changes, challenges and opportunities relevant to our communities are beyond the ability of any one group or organisation to deal with. Therefore, we recommend: that Council continue to fund Sport Waikato at \$50,000 plus GST per annum as part of their Multi-Year Community Grant process, to provide this important service that includes working in partnership with Council to leverage quality play, active recreation and sport outcomes for the Thames-Coromandel District.

As part of work completed against our already existing service agreement with Council there already a number of agreed priority projects for the Matamata-Piako District Council, Sport Waikato and the community to focus on in this period for provision of service. This exemplifies a solid commitment, already, from both organisations to work closely with one another to enhance play, active recreation and sport participation in the district.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to make a submission as part of Council’s LTP process.

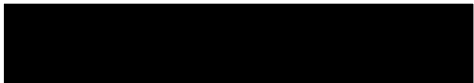
**1. Key Documents and Data Sets to refer to in Reference to this Submission**

- Moving Waikato
- The Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan (WRASP)
- Matamata-Piako Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan (2024 – Draft)
- Regional Community Survey 2022
- Regional Club and Regional Sporting Organisation Survey 2022
- Active NZ 2021

**4. SPORT WAIKATO CONTACTS**

Should the Council wish to seek further information or clarification on this submission, please contact:

**Matthew Cooper**  
**Chief Executive**



**Dr. Amy Marfell**  
**General Manager – Regional Leadership**

