

Sport New Zealand response to consultation document on 2050 Infrastructure Plan

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the consultation document that you have published as part of developing a 2050 Infrastructure Plan. This note sets out our view on certain aspects of the proposed contents of the draft Infrastructure Plan and highlights some areas where we think more could be done to support the proposed Infrastructure Vision 2050. We would be very happy to meet with you to discuss any of this.

We support the proposed 'Infrastructure Vision 2050' and the broader considerations about infrastructure that support this...

The consultation document proposes the following infrastructure vision:

'Infrastructure lays the foundation for the people, places and businesses of Aotearoa New Zealand to thrive for generations'

We support this proposed vision and, in particular, the wider considerations of the role infrastructure can play that are captured in this vision (such as the role that infrastructure can play in setting the foundations for places and people to thrive).

We also note the section in the infrastructure strategy consultation document that states:

Looking to 2050, we aim for infrastructure that supports:

- *A productive, sustainable and carbon-neutral economy.*
- *Affordable, accessible and healthy housing.*
- *Reliable, affordable and accessible travel options powered by renewable energy.*
- *Clean natural environments and healthy ecosystems.*
- *Access to education, employment, knowledge and recreation.*
- *Safe and healthy communities, iwi, hapū and whānau.*
- *A globally integrated economy.*
- *Resilience to the stresses and shocks the future will inevitably bring.*

At Sport NZ we have a particular focus on infrastructure that supports individuals and whanau to engage in play, active recreation and sport. Our interests include the following areas of infrastructure:

- 'traditional' sport and recreation infrastructure to support sport and recreation such as sporting facilities, swimming pools, skate parks etc.
- 'non-built' infrastructure that creates opportunities for physical activity such as parks, walking tracks, cycle paths etc
- the emerging area of infrastructure design that explicitly includes opportunities for physical activity and play in the design of 'traditional' infrastructure projects.

In recent years Sport NZ has adopted a regional planning approach where the 14 Regional Sports Trusts, with our support have brought together all the local councils and other key stakeholders within their region to develop a single, region wide Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy/Plan.

These plans have captured in detail the current network of facilities, their condition, their use, the needs of the current communities, the anticipated change in demographics, how the network of facilities can be best utilised and then identified the priority projects for the region to meet the needs of the communities.

The third area noted above, where opportunities for physical activity and play are explicitly catered for in the design of 'traditional' infrastructure projects, is a growing area of focus which is being explored by a number of local authorities who appreciate the benefits that this approach can provide to

individual, whanau and community wellbeing in addition to fulfilling the primary purpose that the infrastructure is intended for.

There are a number of international and domestic examples of this approach which include:

- the ongoing redevelopment of the Invercargill CBD is explicitly considering how opportunities for play and physical activity can be provided for in the redevelopment – this has led to the development of an Invercargill play trail through the CBD during the redevelopment and the inclusion of principles on play and active transport in the six Master Plan Principles developed and adopted by the Invercargill City Council to shape the redevelopment.
- imaginative uses of old infrastructure include this 'Streetmekka'¹ project in Denmark which created a multi-use recreation space for young people and 'breathed life' into an old abandoned factory. This maximises the use of public space and reimagines unused pieces of infrastructure.
- the emerging area of child-friendly urban design offers some valuable insights into how opportunities for physical activity and play can be 'designed in' to significant infrastructure projects with a wide range of ensuing benefits. As a relevant report² from Arup notes:
 - *'The benefits of a child-friendly city go beyond children to add value to all citizens' lives. The amount of time children spend playing outdoors, their ability to get around independently, and their level of contact with nature are strong indicators of how a city is performing, and not just for children but for all city dwellers. Perhaps uniquely, a child-friendly approach has the potential to unite a range of progressive agendas – including health and wellbeing, sustainability, resilience and safety – and to act as a catalyst for urban innovation.'*
- The report from Arup noted above includes a number of case studies where the ability for children to play and be physically active has been 'designed in' to traditional infrastructure projects. One practical example is if all street furniture has to score highly on playability as well as functionality during procurement, a bench can become a destination; a child could crawl under it, climb over it, or swing on it, while accompanying parents are prompted to spend more time outside.
- Sport NZ's neighbourhood Play System prototype is looking at the impact that infrastructure and investment into neighbourhoods or city wide can have on better play outcomes – Play Enjoyment/ Accessibility, Awareness and Opportunity. We are working on defining the metrics and measurements in relation to this to improve both the planning and enabling of play in infrastructure decisions.

More information about how opportunities for play and physical activity have been explicitly considered in the redevelopment of the Invercargill CBD is included in Appendix 1 while Appendix 2 provides more information on Sport NZ's work in relation to sport and recreation facilities.

...but consider that physical and mental wellbeing should be added to the types of wellbeing in the proposed decision-making principles.

We support the inclusion of social and cultural wellbeing in the description of the 'efficiency' principle (page 25) but consider that physical and mental wellbeing should also be explicitly included so this would read:

¹ <https://www.e-architect.com/denmark/streetmekka-in-viborg>

² <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-designing-for-urban-childhoods>

***‘Efficient:** Infrastructure decisions provide value for money, meaning that the benefits of infrastructure for economic, social, environmental, **physical, mental** and cultural wellbeing are larger than the costs to provide it.’*

We consider that this inclusion of physical and mental wellbeing would support and reinforce the proposed vision that sees the role of infrastructure as supporting people, places and businesses to thrive. This is also supported by other parts of the consultation document which notes the fundamental principle that *‘infrastructure should support ora nga tangata or the wellbeing of people’* (page 25).

It may also be useful to consider aligning the indicators relating to the benefits of infrastructure with those identified in Treasury’s Living Standards Framework and broader wellbeing work³. This may provide an opportunity to help with the challenge of measuring the impact that any infrastructure changes can be considered to have on dimensions of wellbeing.

The broader conception of infrastructure that is included in the proposed vision does not seem to be reflected throughout the rest of the draft plan

We support the focus on promoting low-carbon transport journeys, in particular the use of ‘active transport’ such as walking and cycling. However, beyond this, the consultation document does not seem to include a significant focus on the other aspects of infrastructure (e.g. infrastructure to support social, cultural and physical wellbeing) that we consider are an integral part of the proposed vision to help people and places thrive.

There is strong evidence about the value that sport and recreation infrastructure can provide...

Sport NZ considers play, recreation, and sports facilities to be critical factors in the wellbeing of communities. As such these facilities should be considered as social or civic infrastructure.

We know that the presence of sport and recreation infrastructure in itself is not sufficient to ensure that people are active but it is a key part of the social-ecological model of behaviour change that Sport NZ uses in its work to support people to be physically active⁴.

There is emerging evidence which suggests that good quality, accessible community sporting and recreation infrastructure is associated with increased leisure time physical activity and the associated improved health and wellbeing outcomes that we know physical activity provides. These broader outcomes include building a sense of place and creating resilient and better-connected communities.

Relevant evidence includes:

- Evidence on the benefits of community sporting infrastructure⁵ – research from the UK indicates a positive social return on investment in community infrastructure such as community leisure facilities.
- There is also evidence about the association between physical activity and proximity to community sporting infrastructure and opportunities to be active such as:
 - a study from Hong Kong⁶ showed a link between the availability of neighbourhood sport facilities and leisure physical activity for adolescents. Increasing awareness of neighbourhood sport facilities or building more such facilities may help active adolescents maintain or increase their leisure-time physical activity.

³ <https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/>

⁴ <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/1144/sport-nz-outcomes-framework2.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23750472.2020.1794938>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235649257_Longitudinal_Relations_of_Perceived_Availability_of_Neighborhood_Sport_Facilities_With_Physical_Activity_in_Adolescents_An_Analysis_of_Potential_Moderators

- A study from the US⁷ found that access to parks and recreational facilities was negatively associated with older adults' healthcare costs (i.e. those with better access to parks and recreational facilities had lower healthcare costs). These findings indicate that access to parks and recreational facilities correlates with increased physical activity levels among older adults, which may reduce their healthcare costs.
- Community sport and recreation facilities, particularly modern multi-use hub facilities, can provide a focal point for a community and facilitate the provision of many different opportunities for play and physical activity. In addition to the physical and mental health benefits, participation in these activities can also provide benefits in improving social connectedness/cohesion and community resilience. Often these venues can also provide facilities that other community groups can use for other purposes (i.e. not related to physical activity).

...but there are no obvious avenues of funding for sport and recreation infrastructure.

There is no specific funding stream dedicated towards the cost of sports and recreation facilities and infrastructure. In practice, this means that the design, building and maintenance of specific facilities is reliant on support from a wide range of sources which can include local authorities, Lotto or gaming funding, fundraising, philanthropy and commercial funding.

The lack of any dedicated funding pool leads to a range of issues:

- there is no strategic oversight of the provision of sport and recreation infrastructure across New Zealand (or even within a region) and therefore no way of ensuring that those areas with the greatest need for this type of infrastructure receive the support they need.
- the funding challenges can mean that even if a region is successful in raising money to build a facility, it may not be able to raise sufficient funding for maintenance/upgrades. This can mean that the ongoing value and life of the facility is compromised.
- facilities often need to be funded by local authorities through rates. Local authorities face many cost pressures and spending on sport and recreation facilities can be seen as low priority compared to urgent cost pressures related to water pipes, housing etc. This can be a particular issue in low socio-economic areas where lower incomes and house prices mean a relatively low return from rates and therefore even more pressure on how to use that money (an example is the current situation in Gisborne where there is a need for upgrades to the existing sport and recreation infrastructure but very limited ability to fund this from the low rate return the local authority receives).
- new facilities are often dependent on the quality of local leadership (e.g. whether or not an area gets new facilities may depend more on the ability of an individual leader to access various funding sources rather than on any type of needs analysis).

We consider that there should be a more explicit focus on how to support social and cultural infrastructure in the Infrastructure Strategy

There are a number of ways that this could be provided:

- The most far-reaching approach would be to explicitly include the wider social value of any investment in infrastructure into the decision-making process for this investment. This approach has already been adopted in other countries. For example, from 1 January 2021, any public procurement - including infrastructure – in the United Kingdom must now consider the wider social value of investment (driven at least in part by the 2012 Social Value Act). Government departments must now use the social value model to assess and score suppliers on the wider positive benefits they bring by delivering the contract⁸. Many UK local

⁷ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23750472.2020.1794938>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-deliver-value-to-society-through-public-procurement>

authorities are also including a specific focus on social value in their own spending (e.g. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was the first in the country to incorporate an evaluation of social value in its Spatial Development Strategy while Salford City Council requires all major developments to submit a Social Value Strategy at the planning application stage).

- The definition of value for money (considering the wider social/economic/cultural benefits as part of the decision-making process) suggests that the Infrastructure Commission considers that these types of wider social/economic/cultural benefits should be included as part of the decision-making process about infrastructure but it is not clear how this could be done. Explicitly including a consideration of the social value of any investment in infrastructure into the decision-making process for this investment could be a way to do this, especially if that consideration was about maximising the social value of any specific piece of infrastructure.
- Another way to include a focus on social or cultural infrastructure would be to include a specific focus on supporting 'social infrastructure' (such as sport and recreation facilities, etc) in the Infrastructure Strategy as a way of enabling people and communities to thrive. This type of fund could also cover broader social and cultural infrastructure as well as sport and recreation facilities. This could be included in the proposed Infrastructure Strategy by way of an identified, explicit need in the 'enabling competitive cities and regions' section or an expanded reference to connectedness (i.e. considering the need to improve social connections as well as physical connections). For example, this could be framed as 'enabling connected and competitive cities and regions'.
- There is also a broader opportunity to include consideration of opportunities for physical activity and play into more 'traditional' infrastructure design building on the examples noted earlier and in Appendix 1.

We would be very happy to meet with the Infrastructure Commission to discuss any of the points raised in this paper.

Appendix 1- Redevelopment of Invercargill City Centre - providing opportunities for physical activity and play in the design of 'traditional' infrastructure projects

The largest project under way in Invercargill at the moment is the redevelopment of the city's central business district. This project is expected to cost tens of millions of dollars and involves the demolition of several city blocks. Demolition work began in January 2020. A consortium made up of the Invercargill City Council and various developers, is managing the project, which is set to take five years to complete.

The demolition work, and subsequent building projects, has completely changed the landscape in the CBD. Before the redevelopment there were currently no outdoor play spaces in the CBD and this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to prototype and showcase how a play space could work in the CBD, and provide benefits to whanau, businesses and the community.

The project has created several opportunities for Healthy Families Invercargill to influence aspects of the redevelopment process and the decision makers, community leaders and community to think differently about the importance of play and physical activity. Through engagement with key organisations involved in the redevelopments such as the firm HWR Group and the Invercargill City Council, Healthy Families Invercargill has influenced the shape of the redevelopment so that it would support physical activity and play. This has involved:

- Working with the ICC Inner City Coordinator and Neighbouring Retailers Group (NRG) to design play and active transport opportunities during the CBD re-build and beyond including the development of an Invercargill play trail through the CBD during the redevelopment (Invers Play Trail). This involved working with NRG and key stakeholders such as Council (Parks, Roding, Urban Planning, Community Development and Inner City Coordinator) and Invercargill Central Ltd (Developer) to agree on spaces to be used and consent/approval for the activities to be located at those locations. Following this we finalised the play activity ideas for each respective space and have turned these into functional mini-play spaces during the rebuild, with five key locations which offer intergenerational play.
- Working with ICC Parks, Roding and Urban Planning to use their playground design expertise and application into urban settings and Sport Southlands Made to Move team for their connections to schools and the community concerning play and physical activity.
- Working with the Invercargill Central Limited team to create a play space near the new Food Village on Esk St targeting intergenerational play. This is an opportunity to not only activate play and physical activity in this area, but also potentially influence retailers and developers on opportunities for further play spaces in the future (e.g. a dedicated repurposed shipping container, located on the south side of Esk St, which is transformed into a destination play space offering a range of experiences for all abilities).
- Through partnering with the ICC Roding, Parks and Urban Planning team the Healthy Families Invercargill Manager was invited to be one of 20 people on the ICC CBD master plan working group representing Sport Southland. This presented an opportunity to advocate for play and active transport and has led to the inclusion of principles on play and active transport being included in the six Master Plan Principles developed and adopted by ICC to shape the redevelopment (<https://icc.govt.nz/citystreets/guiding-principles/>).

In May 2021 Invercargill City Council confirmed the preferred option to invest \$23.36 million for the City Centre Streetscape and urban play 2021-2025 (due to be officially adopted at the end of June 2021).

Appendix 2- Sport NZ's work in relation to sport and recreation facilities

The Sporting Facilities Framework <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/1411/nz-facilities-framework.pdf> was developed in 2015 to address a number of challenges specific to this type of social infrastructure including:

- Gaps and duplications in the overall network of facilities
- Facilities that are not fit-for-purpose
- Facilities that communities cannot afford
- Facilities that are overdue for replacement

The outcomes we are seeking through this framework are:

- Strategic decision making around facility development that ensures:
 - Robust planning and use of technical guidelines
 - Sustainable facilities developed in the right locations
 - Investor collaboration at all levels of the facility hierarchy
- Smart Investment in sport and recreation facilities that:
 - Makes the best use of the limited resources available
 - Is coordinated and aligned
 - Ensures that priority projects are funded
- Sport and recreation facilities that:
 - Are fit-for-purpose
 - Are well utilised
 - Are future proof

The framework itself has six steps or principles that should be applied when considering the development of any sport or recreation facility:

- Meeting an identified need
- Sustainability
- Partnering and collaboration
- Integration
- Future proofing
- Accessibility

To achieve our stated outcomes Sport NZ has been providing leadership, guiding investment, and enabling others over the last 6 years.

We have adopted a regional planning approach where the 14 Regional Sports Trusts, with our support have brought together all the local councils within the region to develop a single, region wide Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy/Plan.

These plans have captured in detail the current network of facilities, their condition, their use, the needs of the current communities, the anticipated change in demographics, how the network of facilities can be best utilised and then identified the priority projects for the region to meet the needs of the communities.

These strategies and plans have also included the development of a process to review new projects when they are proposed and determine whether they should be considered for further development and their potential priority for the region.

Key to this approach has been the breaking down of the artificial district boundaries between different councils and a growing understanding that needs of communities can be met more efficiently by taking a regional network view.

The strategies and plans are then used to guide and inform both regional and national funders as to where their investment is likely to have the greatest impact for the community.