

Windsor Park

Background – The Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub is an incorporated Society that owns and governs Windsor Park in Mairangi Bay.

Windsor Park was formed in 1970-71 when Dominion Breweries (DB) received a licence to open the Windsor Park Hotel. A condition of the licence granted was that DB put in some sports fields.

ECBC (East Coast Bays Cricket) were invited by DB to bring the homeless cricket club to Windsor Park. ECBC agreed and it became the home ground of ECBC in the 1975-76 season. At that time there was a grandstand and “D” Block for changing sheds with showers but there were no social facilities at the Park.

In 1982 DB became weary of paying the ground upkeep and offered to sell the playing fields and facilities to the then ECB Council. The Council took two years to turn down the proposition.

At this juncture ECBC and the ECBRFC (East Coast Bays Rugby) met to ascertain whether there was interest in purchasing the fields together. ECBRFC were operating out of Freyberg Park with very poor fields and a declining clubroom facility.

A steering committee was formed to pursue the possible purchase. In 1986 the Park was purchased from DB. This steering committee of 1984 went on to form the 8 member Windsor Park Board made up of four members from each club.

Originally the owning body was a Trust but in November 1987 the entity Windsor Park Board Incorporated was incorporated. It changed its name to Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub Incorporated in April 2018 to better reflect what the body was.

In 1989 a new clubhouse was opened and ECBRFC made the move to Windsor Park from their previous home at Freyberg Park.

At that stage Windsor Park Board Incorporated were in debt to the tune of \$750,000. Both clubs worked hard to reduce this debt in ensuing years and paid off all debt around 2008.

The Park and its facilities – Windsor Park is 6.38 hectares and comprises 3 rugby fields and a non sand-based auxiliary field in the winter and a Premier cricket field and Junior cricket playing fields in Summer. The fields are also used for Touch Rugby in the Summer thus providing a true multi-purpose facility.

During the winter the fields are at times also used to host Rangitoto College, Westlake Boys High School and Long Bay College rugby games. North Harbour Rugby also use the fields for NPC pre-season games, FPC (Women’s) pre-season games, North Harbour B games and training. The fields have also played host to the Black Ferns Women’s Rugby team for training and during the recent Women’s Rugby World Cup provided a training venue for the Italian team. Recently the Italian Men’s team based themselves there whilst training for games in the Pacifica Islands.

In the summer the fields have been used to host cricket games for Auckland A, Rangitoto 1st XI and Rosmini College 1st XI.

The neighbouring church utilises the grounds from time to time for recreation activities and Sense Rugby, an Occupational Therapy led rugby programme designed to help children who usually find it difficult to be part of a sports team, also hold their sessions at the park. American Football have also used the park on a number of occasions.

The fields are also used extensively by the local community for leisure and exercise activities.

There is also a Clubrooms facility that services East Coast Bays Cricket in the Summer and East Coast Bays Rugby Club in the winter as well as the Touch Rugby module. The Clubrooms are also used by the community for meetings, training sessions, birthdays and wakes.

There is also a large changing shed facility and a 4-lane outdoor cricket net facility. Once again, the cricket nets are fully open to the wider local community to use. The ground also has 2 recently renovated sightscreens used for cricket and a scoreboard that services the number 1 rugby field.

Temporary seating for the rugby season has been added.

We also have the legal right (by way of an easement) to utilise car parking spaces providing more car parking capacity than any other community park on the North Shore and probably in all of Auckland.

Current situation – The facilities at the Park are now of an age where they require substantial upgrading and maintenance and there is also a desire to add modern facilities that the local community can use for the next 50 plus years.

We need facilities that cater for the growing number of female participants in the sports that use our Park. At the moment our facilities are not designed for mixed use nor are they family friendly. We need to cater for the current and future generations. Our facilities were designed for a previous generation and are not fit for purpose.

Both the Rugby and Cricket Clubs believe their strategic survival, in an ever-evolving community sport space, relies upon having the best facilities.

The Cricket Club requires a 4-lane indoor cricket centre. This will more than wash its face from a commercial perspective and will open up a myriad of opportunities for community use across multiple sports and age groups.

Modern changing sheds are required that reflect and cater for the changing mix of people who enjoy our Park.

A modern community focussed social area (Clubrooms) is required that offers an attractive area for all of our communities to come together in a facility that is family friendly and also offers commercial and community hire opportunities.

The fields require modern floodlighting that will allow greater training opportunities for the growing number of people using the Park. This will also allow the training and playing loads on the field to be better managed reducing maintenance costs. It also offers the opportunity for people to exercise and play sport during times that better suit their lifestyle rather than being locked into a Saturday afternoon orthodoxy.

Additional enhancements planned at the Park include laying a concrete footpath around the perimeter of the Park to enable all weather walking and jogging capability; the additional of exercise equipment alongside the footpath; terraced seating for spectators; a 3x3 basketball court and a children's playground. These enhancements would be funded from the proceeds of the land parcel sale adding to the value that we provide for the community at the Park.

What has the Board done to generate funding to enhance facilities - The Board that governs the Park and its facilities has spent the last 20+ years exploring all options for raising the much needed money for these upgrades and to ensure that our Park remains as a Park shared with the local community.

This has proved extremely challenging as the large funders favour the ambulances at the bottom of the cliff rather than those who provide a fence at the top of the cliff. There seems to be a lack of understanding of the contribution that we make to physical health, mental health and social health within our community.

The scale of our project is beyond what Class 4 Gambling Trusts are able to fund. Auckland Foundation have clearly stated their funding priorities are in the Far North and South Auckland. Large benefactors such as Tindall Foundation, Levene Foundation, Hugh Green Foundation were approached but were not interested in supporting us as their priorities were elsewhere.

The only option left available to the Board to secure the future of our Park as a viable venue for sport and recreation is to sell off a parcel of our land.

Where to from here - after much deliberation the Board has agreed that, in order to fund for the future and to protect the land as a park, it must sell 1.28Ha of the site in order to raise the necessary funds. The land earmarked for sale is currently used to site the Clubrooms and a junior rugby training area. The land is not sand-based, has no drainage and is not suitable nor used for playing of official games of rugby or cricket.

All current playing fields will not be impacted by the sale. In fact, the proposed investment to floodlight all the playing fields from proceeds from the sale, will provide much greater community availability and utilisation through spreading the loads on the fields and increasing the time the fields are accessible.

The land is currently zoned Active Recreation in the Auckland Unitary Plan. The proposal is to seek Auckland Council consent for the rezoning of the earmarked for sale land as Mixed Housing Urban (MHU).

The Board is cognisant there were obligations under the Trust Deed under which the land was purchased from Dominion Breweries. It is currently taking legal advice on whether these obligations still apply.

The Board does not have in its possession a referred to agreement between Windsor Park Board Incorporated (now Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub Incorporated) and North Shore City Council regarding the repayment of a forgiven loan between the two parties in the event of a sale of the Park or a parcel of land at the Park. Auckland Council would need to provide evidence of this agreement.

A maintenance agreement is in place with Auckland Council having been signed with the North Shore City Council. There are no obligations under that agreement that prevents a sale of the Park or any parcel of land at the Park. As all playing fields will be retained by Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub Incorporated, as part of the proposed rezoning and subsequent sale, this maintenance agreement will remain in place.

There is a precedent for sales of parcels of land at the Park. Parcels were sold in 1995 and 2005 with no objections being lodged by the then North Shore City Council. Revenue from those sales was used to pay off debt ensuring that Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub Incorporated remained a financially viable organisation.

This rezoning will allow Windsor Park Community and Multisport Hub Incorporated to sell the referenced land area, with all monies reinvested back into the recreational facilities for the benefit of the local community.

The Board is very open to negotiating with Auckland Council for Auckland Council to buy the identified parcel of land at market rates. However, when this has been muted with Local Boards and Albany Ward Councillors, the Board has been advised that funds are not available for this.

Should negotiations be opened, the Board would need a quick resolution from Auckland Council, as the existing facilities at the Park require immediate attention and proceeds from a sale would be reinvested by the Board to remediate them.

Summary – We are providing the community with a \$100m facility that otherwise the Council would have to provide.

We are selling land in order to ensure that our Park remains a sporting and recreation asset that we share with the community.

Over the 38 years the Board has enjoyed a healthy relationship with North Shore City Council and subsequently, Auckland Council and their contractors. This has resulted in a unique relationship that allows us as owners of the Park and also Auckland Council to provide the community a fantastic asset.

We are committed to see the community continue to benefit from our asset and the sale of the parcel of land is purely to allow this to continue.