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Subject: Waitomo DC LTP Submission - Sport Waikato

Kia Ora Koutou,

Please find attached Sport Waikato's submission to the Waitomo District Council LTP consultation process. We wish Council all the best with their deliberations and thank you for the opportunity to feedback on the proposal.

We would like to take up the opportunity to speak to our submission at the upcoming verbal hearings.

Ngaa mihi

Amy

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Mahia te mahi hei painga mo te iwi – we strive every day to 'do the work for the betterment of the people' – Te Puea Herangi

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**SPORT WAIKATO'S SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE
WAITOMO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Long-Term Plan 2021-31

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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, education outcomes and general wellbeing - and makes 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

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

MOVING WAIKATO
A STRATEGY TO GROW PARTICIPATION IN PLAY, ACTIVE RECREATION AND SPORT IN THE WAIKATO REGION

**ONE VISION
EVERYONE OUT THERE AND ACTIVE**

Moving Waikato is an evidence based strategy for physical activity through play, active recreation and sport for the Waikato region, and gives focus and clarity towards 2025.

It seeks to build on the positive momentum of existing partnerships and to increase the provision of opportunities for both participation and quality experiences for the people of the region.

OUR PEOPLE

A focus on the provision of opportunities that meet the needs of the people of our region

MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE TAMARIKI, RANGATAHI AND WHAANAU

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

A focus on quality local delivery of play, active recreation and sport experiences

HELPING COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

A focus on regional and national partners working together to lead change and enhance outcomes

LEADING AND DELIVERING CHANGE

ACHIEVING SUCCESS THROUGH WORKING TOGETHER

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, targeting participation among women and girls and the development of a regional cycle strategy. This next period (2020-25) will see a focus on Rangatahi (12-17 years) and Tamariki (5-11 years) with the inclusion of Tamariki Mokopuna (0-4 years) alongside specific commitment and attention to enabling participation among targeted populations, including: Maaori; deprived communities; women and girls; and those with low participation levels.

Alongside the development and review of Moving Waikato, Sport Waikato has recently undertaken significant transformational change of our organisation, and particularly, how we work. This change has seen us step away from delivery services (volunteering at events, supporting the running of sport and physical activity initiatives and delivering exercise programmes), to a focus on working closer with key partners to provide high-value strategic regional leadership in play, active recreation and sport via a strategic, collaborative (partnered), regional approach to influencing the system – Sport Waikato not necessarily doing the delivery but influencing those who do.

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. activity for people of all ages and backgrounds.

We wish to take a moment to thank Waitomo District Council for their support of and investment in Sport Waikato. This includes via the Regional Facilities Plan (now Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan) since its launch in 2014 and now revised as an expanded 2021 iteration. Additionally, we wish to acknowledge Waitomo District Council's partnership to enact our new way of working and importantly, to leverage joint outcomes as they relate to your own play, active recreation and sport priorities.

Sport Waikato would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Waitomo District Council on the formation and adoption of the **Waitomo District Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan**. This plan not only demonstrates a commitment by the Council to support play, active recreation and sport projects in the Waitomo communities but it also emphasises a strategic direction for decision-making and investment (alongside Vibrant Safe Waitomo) that is informed by both relevant demographic and participation data *and* community voice.

Sport Waikato are excited to work alongside you to continue to ensure a range of opportunities for people to engage in physical activity exist across Waitomo District. 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 in the district and across the King Country.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Waikato region is comprised of ten districts, all with different community profiles, which are growing or decreasing at various rates. Across all communities within the Waikato, the population is aging. Recent Active New Zealand data shows that sport participation decreases over the lifetime, and people typically choose more active recreation and less formal sport activities.

It is projected that the Waitomo District will have a decrease in population in the coming years, which in itself can present challenges for the maintenance of physical activity infrastructure.¹ In general, decreasing populations mean that there are fewer people participating in play, active recreation and sport. This results in diminishing demand for facilities and less funding to maintain current infrastructure which has consequences for the ongoing sustainability of provision. There will be increasing pressure and advantages for organisations to work collaboratively, share facilities in ways that are affordable and convenient, and potentially amalgamate.

A change in the distribution of population in each Waikato district brings with it changing participation preferences. Traditional high participation sports can change, creating an increased preference for people to be active through play and active recreation. To keep up with ever changing participation preferences, it is critical that facilities are flexible, with the ability to offer a range of play, active recreation and sporting opportunities. The challenge lies in supporting changes to populations, demographics and participation trends in a smart/strategic manner to ensure sport and recreation opportunities, and the spaces and places for participation are accessible to all and that barriers to participation are removed. In particular, this requires strategic, long-term planning and collaborative provision with partners such as education, and the capacity to extend and repurpose facilities.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

With an increasing population, sport and recreation opportunities are essential if the district is to effectively manage and enhance its community's overall wellbeing and minimise any negative social issues. Research has consistently demonstrated the value of sport and recreation in the lives of people and communities (Sport NZ 2018 – The Value of Sport):

- 92% of people believe being active keeps them physically fit and healthy, and helps relieve stress
- 88% of people believe that sport and other physical activities provide them with opportunities to achieve and help build confidence
- 84% of people believe sport brings people together and creates a sense of belonging
- 74% of people say sport help builds vibrant and stimulating communities
- Sport and physical activity can reduce rates of many physical health related disorders and improve health outcomes as a result
- Evidence indicates a positive association between children's physical activity participation and academic achievement
- Participation in sport has been linked with greater employability in graduates from universities
- There is a link between sport participation, improved social capital, feelings of social cohesion and community identity

Of course, an understanding and appreciation of participation trends, preferences and barriers is essential to enabling communities through sport and recreation.

¹ At the time of writing population projections were not available from the 2018 census. This combined with immigration changes due to Covid-19 may mean that population projections will need to be updated as more information becomes available.

Active New Zealand (2018) shows that only 46% of adults (18+) and 61% of young people (5-17 years) in the Waitomo District currently do enough physical activity to positively impact their health. This research also highlights a significant appetite among the district's population to do more – 67% of adults and 70% of young people have a desire to do more physical activity. The results also show that recreation is a top priority for New Zealanders with the top five activities having a recreational focus, such as playing, walking, jogging, swimming and cycling. Indeed, 78% of the Waikato Region's adults believe that being physically active in the great outdoors is an important part of New Zealanders' lives (Active NZ, 2017). Physical activity in natural settings has been linked in some studies to have more positive influence on mental health and wellbeing than physical activity in an indoor setting. The affinity that New Zealanders have with the outdoors and the rising popularity of outdoor recreation (e.g. walking, tramping, cycling) needs to be considered in future planning and suggests that a focus on improving neighbourhood walkability, the quality and quantity of recreational tracks and trails, the quality of parks and playgrounds, and providing adequate active transport infrastructure is likely to generate positive impacts on activity among adults and young people, including in urban settings.

As the cost of living rises, it is also important to consider the effects of social (in)equity and deprivation on physical activity participation. Almost one quarter (24%) of the Waikato region live in a deprived area, with Waitomo District having 39% of the population living in highly deprived areas. Those in high deprivation communities have lower levels of participation in physical activity through sport, active recreation and play, with many struggling to prioritise time and finding access to opportunities difficult. With this in mind, provision should reflect district demographics and support participation in play, active recreation and sport among high vs. low deprivation communities with the focus being on equitable provision of services (vs. equal). This may mean a higher level of provision with appropriate programming to better meet the needs of those in high deprivation areas.

Finally, there is a need to consider the impacts of Covid-19 on people's activity levels and preferences, as well as on fiscal resources and in the presentation of ongoing challenges across the sector. The pandemic saw increases by both young people and adults in participation across activities such as walking and cycling and almost half of the NZ population starting or restarting physical activity through active recreation (Sport NZ 2020 – Covid-19 Insights Report) – a trend that it is important that we continue to nurture through appropriate infrastructure, provision and messaging. Equally, we saw strain placed on the sector, and particularly sporting codes, with increased need for sustainable funding mechanisms, collaborative approaches between and across codes and innovation in 'product' delivery and development being high priorities for the future.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR WAITOMO DISTRICT

Waikato communities, including those of Waitomo District, and their participation preferences are changing rapidly. Therefore, those that plan and provide facilities, spaces and places will need to consider the following:

- **Demand:** The location and types of facilities, spaces and places where play, active recreation and sport take place need to adapt to match and meet changing community needs (including areas of deprivation, social inequity and increased ethnic diversity)
- **Multi-purpose:** Design and modification need to focus on multi-purpose use and be flexible to allow future adaptation. There needs to be a focus on more than sport, as play and active recreation continue to become increasingly important domains of movement.
- **Collaboration:** It is increasingly important for all stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve delivery of programmes, facilities, spaces and places (including for the purposes of increasing sustainability) where play, active recreation and sport take place. There is an opportunity to expand relationships with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health

to consider participation in the use of appropriate facilities, spaces and places as an enabler of better health and wellbeing outcomes and decreased health sector costs.

- **Rationalisation:** Where repairs and maintenance costs exceed utilisation, particularly with local facilities, rationalisation needs to be considered. Asset management plans are an important feature of future planning.

3. OUR FEEDBACK ON YOUR LONG-TERM PLAN

In response to the draft 2021-31 LTP consultation document, we wish to comment on the following:

1. **Thank you:** On behalf of the people of Waitomo District, Sport Waikato thank you for your significant contribution to play, active recreation and sport. As highlighted on page 4, district and city councils are key enablers of physical activity who drive the desired 'value of sport' outcomes expressed on page 5 and your effort and investment is duly noted and sincerely appreciated.

We also take a moment to congratulate Council on some significant play, active recreation and sport projects achieved since 2018, including:

- Refurbishment of the Marokopa Reserve Playground.
- The completed redesign of Redwood Park Playground.
- New playground equipment installed in Maniaiti/ Benneydale.
- The Basketball area installed in Eketone Street, Te Kuiti
- The adoption and implementation of the Vibrant Safe Waitomo Action Plan with 36 actions, including a significant focus on Hakinakina (sport and recreation)
- Participation in ongoing discussions to look at opportunities to progress the Te Kuiti Indoor Court project

2. **King Country Community Indoor Stadium:** Sport Waikato would like to acknowledge Council's willingness to be part of the King Country Community Indoor Stadium project, and for your significant contribution of \$1,500,000 to this much needed facility. We recommend that Council continue to occupy 'a key seat at the table' as we work collectively towards the development of this significant community physical activity asset that will play an important role in the growth of physical activity participation and wellbeing in not only Te Kuiti but across the King Country more broadly for many years to come. The Indoor Stadium remains a priority project in the **Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan (2021)** due to the insufficient provision of indoor court space in the district and surrounding King Country area. As part of a network approach to facility provision, Sport Waikato along with Sport New Zealand strongly supports this project and will continue to support and advocate for its progression alongside other key partners (e.g. Te Kuiti High School, Ministry of Education, Trust Waikato, Game on Charitable Trust, Grassroots Trust and Sport New Zealand).

Now that we have robustly assessed 'true costs' aligned to risk and escalation and key external partners have seen it fit to increase their initial capital contributions (and in some cases OPEX), we would also encourage Waitomo District Council to also reassess its position on OPEX contributions to this exciting community, local and regional asset that will play an important part to increasing the pride, cultural and social wellbeing and achievement of your communities for many years to come.

3. **District Plan Review:** Sport Waikato supports Waitomo District Council's planned District Plan review, and in particular attention to setting the direction, form and shape of the district's urban communities including the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The inclusion of considerations for enhancing play, active recreation and sport opportunities is strongly recommended as part of this process due to their direct impact on the liveability of communities and their contribution to overall community wellbeing outcomes.

3. **Parks and Recreation:** Sport Waikato supports Council's proposed investment in the establishment of a Matakiora/Brook Park Development Plan in year 3 of the LTP. Matakiora/Brook Park is a significant physical activity asset to the community as well as being a site of cultural significance to mana whenua. It makes sense to maximise the use of this community asset and develop it in accordance with community need.
4. **Playgrounds:** Sport Waikato supports Council's proposed investment in play. Play is an important movement and learning opportunity for tamariki (5-11 years) and with reduction in sizes of backyards due to changes in urban planning, playgrounds have an important role to play in facilitating physical activity among children and families. We would encourage inclusive options to be considered as part of play opportunity planning – such as access for children with disabilities and impairments (physical, sensory etc). We would also encourage Council to consider more than just traditional 'playground' infrastructure and look to spaces and places that encourage free play. Sport Waikato would be happy to assist in the design of play opportunities in the district through our work with Sport NZ to ensure maximal use of these assets and return on investment for Council.
5. **Waitomo District Aquatic Centre:** Sport Waikato supports Council's proposal for aquatic provision renewal. Pools continue to be a significant asset supporting the activity, safety and wellbeing of people, therefore, it is imperative that these be maintained for long-term future use. This is a priority according to the Waikato Regional Aquatics Plan (2017).
6. **Walking and Cycling Strategy:** Sport Waikato supports Council's proposed development of a walking and cycling strategy. Walking and cycling are in the top 5 physical activities for New Zealanders, with district level data indicating that 77% of adults in the Waitomo district had participated in walking (for recreational purposes) over the past 7 days (Active NZ, 2018). Sport Waikato would be happy to support Council in the formation of this strategy.
7. **Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan:** The Regional Sports Facilities Plan was first established in 2014. Designed to guide the development of facilities the community needs (versus wants) at a Regional and Sub Regional level, Sport Waikato is the lead agency guiding the joint implementation of the plan. An initiative of the Mayoral Forum, with partnership from all 10 Local Authorities in the region, the Plan offers local authorities the following key concepts:
 - Advocacy with funders and investors for facilities, spaces and places that reflect the principles of the plan.
 - Provision of peer reviews for facility development concepts e.g. Feasibility Projects, Business Case Assessments and Concept Designs.
 - Assistance with investment negotiations in facility development and utilisation.
 - Sharing of knowledge including resources specific to sports facilities and the sport sector.
 - Partnering to optimise facility utilisation by way of fostering sport organisation relationships to attract events and collaborative working.
 - Advice and assistance in the development of "Community Hub" concepts (co-location of organisations in sport and in a broader context).
 - The provision of training opportunities and information sharing.
 - Increasing regional understanding and management of facility utilisation data to understand demand and enable informed decision making.

In 2020, the regional plan was reviewed and expanded to include a broadened scope of play, active recreation and sport spaces and places to ensure its continued relevance to the network and in line with changing participation patterns and trends. The 2021 **Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan** has been endorsed by the Waikato TLA CE Forum and Waikato Mayoral Forum for adoption and continued support by the region's 10 Territorial Local Authorities as at March 2021.

We recommend: that Sport Waikato continue to be funded to lead the implementation of the Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan in partnership with Waitomo District Council and our region's 9

other TLAs. The proportional contribution of this regional programme is **\$2,750 plus GST per annum** with the total regional budget valued at **\$100,000** across all local authorities.

8. **Regional Connectivity Coordinator (West):** Sport Waikato's Regional Connectivity Coordinator team partner with all 10 Local Authorities across the greater Waikato region and this team includes a Coordinator who works across the Waitomo and Otorohanga 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. Sport Waikato would like to thank Waitomo Waikato District Council for the productive and supportive conversations had around our change and desire to increase our impact in the district via this new way of working.

Services under this model, include:

- Support for local play, active recreation and sport strategy development and planning – including for LTP and annual planning processes
- Implementation of local play, active recreation and sport strategies – including driving, in collaboration with Council staff, key priority projects as outlined in the district Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan
- Facilitation of local spaces, places and facilities projects – e.g. hubbing, facility optimisation initiatives in the district
- Support for the local play, active recreation and sport sector – including support for improving attention to strategy and innovation with the aim of increasing inclusivity, accessibility, diversity and sustainability of opportunities for participants
- Increasing collaborative partnerships between key organisations to strengthen play, active recreation and sport systems and outcomes for the district
- Connection of specialist Sport Waikato staff to the district (e.g. coaching, women and girls, Health and Physical Education Curriculum specialists in Primary Schools)
- Regular connection with Council staff to track play, active recreation and sport outcomes

We recommend: that Council continue to fund Sport Waikato, under the new and reduced funding quantum of **\$35,000 plus GST per annum**, to provide this important service and work in partnership with us to leverage quality play, active recreation and sport outcomes for the Waitomo District.

4. SPORT WAIKATO CONTACTS

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

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