



BOWLS
NEW ZEALAND
AOTEAROA

2020 - 2030

FACILITIES PLAN

(Updated October 2024)

Background

In December 2012, Bowls New Zealand adopted a facilities strategy document titled “**Bowls 2020 – Securing Our Future**”, prepared by Gryphon Management Consultants. This document outlined the 2010 status of all bowling club facilities available within New Zealand, the management systems of those facilities and the membership models that operated within them.

- In 2010 there were 583 clubs with 44,923 members and 53,352 casual participants.
- In 2020 (pre Covid) there were 472 clubs with 35,000 members and 101,279 casual participants.
- In 2024 (post Covid) there are 460 clubs with a membership of 37,359 and 123,876 casual participants.
- The number of young people/rangatahi playing bowls has steadily risen over time. In 2010 3828 participated in some form in our sport and in 2024 that number has risen to 9901.

The increase in casual participation reflects the ever-changing demographic of New Zealanders accessing our game. Bowling clubs need 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 our communities in 2024/25 and beyond.

This report is for the bowls community within New Zealand and, whilst we acknowledge the various stakeholders that support our community bowling clubs, has been written to guide the local clubs’ own strategy and the place they hold in their local community. *Every bowling club is different, and every club therefore has different aspirations as to the role they wish to play in providing an inclusive facility and the game of bowls to their local community.*

Community Facilities

The future of bowling clubs is directly related to the provision of good quality off-green facilities that will provide for lawn bowlers, as well as for other sports and community activities / groups. 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 additional, compatible user groups and activities.

As we look back over the past few years, it has been evident that many of our clubs have diversified the range of options they offer to the local community. This is perhaps best reflected in the growth of casual participation numbers, which have grown from 54,942 in 2010 to 101,279 in 2020 before the impact of Covid-19. People are returning to our game; the 2024 casual playing numbers are 123,876, exceeding the pre-Covid-19 figures. In addition, the number and variety of community and sporting groups adopting their local bowling club as their new home, e.g. Darts, Pool, Croquet, Snooker, Fishing, Pétanque; as well as RSA clubs, dance groups, film, book and other hobby and enthusiast clubs (Mahjong, Bingo, etc.) has increased significantly.

As we look towards the year 2030, the future of our bowling clubs could perhaps be best described as **‘community facilities FIRST and bowling facilities SECOND’**.

In order to encourage and assist bowling clubs that wish to work towards creating partnerships and shared facilities with other community activities, thereby realising a more diverse use of their facilities, the bowls community needs to:

1. Identify and develop current and new initiatives and partnerships.
2. Move towards a professional administration structure to complement the volunteer club committee and workforce.
3. Promote a 'change conversation' within the club and local community.
4. Communicate and share with their local community, the plans the club is making to embrace a more diverse future.

The role of Bowls New Zealand is to encourage and support a community targeted facilities strategy. Our ability to dictate and control the decisions of clubs at community level is limited as we do not possess the specific knowledge of the structure and dynamics within each local community. Indeed, it is vital that the clubs, rather than Bowls New Zealand, "own" the plans to develop these new relationships.

Through data received via the annual Bowls New Zealand bowling club censuses, we are aware that partnerships are already being promoted between bowling clubs and local community groups. Bowls New Zealand, Council and Regional Sports Trusts are aware of these discussions and are encouraged to play a leadership role to ensure progress is made on these partnerships.

The Facilities Plan of 2010 talked of rationalising the number of bowling clubs based upon population and creating 'super clubs' within key metropolitan areas. This is no longer the intent of our Facilities Strategy.

Instead, 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.

The wellbeing of our communities and their measures of physical and mental health mean we need more, not less, community facilities that are diverse and inclusive in their operation.

Modern Facilities

New and/or upgraded facilities enhance the ability of the club to attract new members, participants and community groups. The reality is that the 1980's furniture and current appearance of many bowling clubs is no longer attractive to the 21st century consumer who expects a professionally delivered experience every time they spend their entertainment dollar. Faced with a tired club and an equally tired volunteer workforce, it is difficult for the bowling club to compete on anything more than price, when it comes to community facility hire.

Acknowledging the matter of funding, bowling clubs should at least consider the following amenities and services, to enhance their offering to the local community:

- New 'see-through' fences to replace old, tired, solid fencing
- Modern signage promoting the clubs' community offering
- The supply of modern, coloured bowls for casual participants. Bowls New Zealand, in conjunction with Aero Bowls have negotiated an excellent deal for clubs wishing to refresh their playing equipment.
- 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, complimentary unlimited Wi-Fi, portable EFTPOS, etc.)
- Children's area
- Shuttle transport
- Ease of access and parking

Facility Management

The traditional (member) volunteer of the sports club is a recruitment challenge that will not disappear in 21st century New Zealand. Many consumers now have an expectation that they can 'turn up and play / pay for' their sport and not volunteer their time to the running of the local club.

Depending upon the scale of the operation, paid roles will need to be considered by most bowling clubs. A professional facility management solution (be that full-time or part-time) will provide the club with a person who can act as the face of the facility in the eyes of new customers, meaning new and existing members (and casual participants) can enjoy the club facilities without being burdened with the operational requirements of running the facility.

A professional Facilities Manager might (depending on hours) fulfil the following roles within the club:

- Delivery of the Annual Business Plan
- Management of volunteers and contractors
- Promotion and delivery of facility usage

An effective facility manager will quickly recover their financial cost, should they be permitted to explore new revenue streams and customers for the bowling club facility. If the role is to be successful, the facility manager role should be separate to the traditional roles undertaken at club level including, but not limited to, the bowls match committee role.

An effective facility management solution should also move the club committee from an entirely operational role to one of governance and accountability.



Bowls New Zealand's Support and Leadership

Several clubs have either recently completed, or are presently undertaking, major changes to their facilities and / or operational model in order to provide modern, relevant playing and management solutions. Bowls New Zealand has created a role titled Facilities Manager who has a database of information that is available for the benefit of all future projects.

When contemplating a major building project and / or instigating a new management structure, the bowling clubs can contact the Facilities Manager to get advice and or assistance:

Building Projects

- Suppliers and selection of materials
- Building process
- Consenting issues

- Audit and controls
- Future proofing of the building, greens and surrounds
- Compliance with Acts and regulations (e.g. Incorporated Societies, building and plant warrant of fitness, etc.)
- Funding process
- Project management
- Insurance

Professional Management and Governance

- The Governance model and constitution
- Skills identification and position descriptions
- Workplace Health and Safety / Legislation
- Communication solutions

Key Bowls New Zealand Partnerships

Bowls New Zealand, through the learnings of bowling clubs around the country, can share information that will be of assistance to any club considering developing its facility or reshaping its management solution.

In certain circumstances, with the support and encouragement of the local clubs and community, Bowls New Zealand should also consider leading the change conversation.

Fieldturf NZ

In 2021 Bowls New Zealand entered into a preferred supplier commercial agreement with Fieldturf NZ to install artificial greens. Fieldturf NZ requested that they withdraw from this agreement effective mid-2024, while continuing to operate in the market. They will honour all warranties for work undertaken during the partnership with Bowls New Zealand.

The partnership with Fieldturf NZ has been a successful one for Bowls New Zealand with the following outcomes:

- Production of top quality new artificial greens as well as refurbishing existing artificial greens.
- The addition of FieldTurf NZ to the supplier options in the NZ market has seen cost reductions for the build / rebuild of a new / existing green.
- Implementation of audit and control measures
- Bowls New Zealand engaged with New Zealand Sports Turf Institute to independently audit all Fieldturf NZ builds to ensure the green aligns with World Bowls standards. No other installer offers this service.

GameOn Turf

In July 2024 Bowls New Zealand agreed a preferred supplier status arrangement with GameOn Turf to ensure a continuation of our undertaking to bowling clubs to partner with a first-class supplier of artificial bowling greens. The focus of the arrangement is to continue to provide a great green at a great price with relevant audit and control mechanisms included to achieve this outcome.

www.gameonturf.co.nz

Shade Systems

Many bowling clubs across the country are considering covering their green(s) with a canopy. Bowls New Zealand is delighted to have agreed a preferred supplier status arrangement with Shade Systems Limited for this purpose.

To expand the range of options presently available to clubs, Bowls New Zealand has sought advice from Shade Systems around potential alternative canopy solutions which may be able to be installed over existing or new greens at significantly less cost than the presently available designs.

Facilities Manager

The appointment of a dedicated Facilities Manager to assist clubs through any facility improvement project they may have with the initial focus on artificial greens and / or covered green options has been a valuable addition to Bowls New Zealand's relationship with its affiliated clubs. The Facilities Manager's role includes, but is not limited to, the provision of advice to clubs around business plans for change, consenting processes, fundraising, project management, audits and controls, member engagement and ongoing care and maintenance.

Councils, Centres and Regional Sports Trusts

There is a wealth of external resource available to bowling clubs seeking to redevelop their facility or management solution. In the case of some regions the bowls Centre (Region) management may have the capability and resource to shape a strategy. This is especially so in the Auckland region with Bowls Auckland having a dedicated fund (and strategy) to develop bowling clubs in central, east, west and south Auckland. n.b. Clubs in the north of Auckland City are under the jurisdiction of Bowls North Harbour.

In addition, the local Regional Sports Trusts (RST) have resources available for bowling clubs, should they need to produce reports on the feasibility of capital investment, along with resource should the club be looking to review its management and governance structure. The RST generally plays the critical role of facilitator for change.

For most bowling clubs, the local council (and/or local board) provides not only a facilitation resource but also a source of funding for facility development. Acknowledging that 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.

2024/25 Projects

There are several capital improvement projects already underway at clubs throughout New Zealand. A summary of these is provided below, showing evidence of the current rate of change within the bowling community. The following is by no means a definitive listing and will require constant monitoring to ensure its accuracy.

Enclosed or Covered Greens

Bowls New Zealand encourages bowling clubs to create covered playing facilities as a growth opportunity. The following locations have, or are building, a full sized covered playing facility:

Fully enclosed 8 Rink indoor facilities (5)

- Invercargill (Waverly Bowling Club)
- Dunedin (Dunedin Lawn Bowls Stadium)
- Wellington (Naenae Bowling Club)
- Hawkes Bay (Bowls Hastings)
- Pukekohe (Pukekohe Cosmopolitan Club)

Fully enclosed stadiums with less than 8 rinks (4)

- Central Otago (Wanaka Bowling Club)
- Central Otago (Clyde Bowling Club)
- North Otago (Meadowbank Bowling Club)
- New Plymouth (Paritutu Bowling Club)

Roof over a green – Installed (6)

- North Harbour (Orewa Bowling Club)
- Auckland (New Lynn Bowling Club)
- Auckland (Remuera Bowling Club)
- Auckland (Royal Oak Bowls)
- Hamilton (Frankton Junction Bowling Club)
- Tauranga (Bowls Tauranga South)

In addition, the following regions are at various stages of discussion regarding investment in a covered facility within their community:

Northland

North Harbour x 2

Auckland x 3

Bay of Plenty

Manawatu

Whanganui

Canterbury

The benefits (for clubs, players, officials and spectators) of a covered green include, but are not limited to:

- Play is not weather dependent (especially rain, but wind and cold also)
- Protection from the sun (a health and safety consideration)
- All year-round play
- Play can be extended into the evening with the inclusion of adequate lighting
- Preservation of the playing surface

Conversion to Artificial Greens

There are at least ten clubs working with various suppliers around the country presently converting their natural green to an all-year-round artificial green at a cost in the range of \$320k - \$350k per green.

This is on top of the 185 existing artificial greens (representing 25% of bowling club playing surfaces).

There are at least another ten clubs around the country presently upgrading their existing artificial green at a cost in the range of \$220k to \$240K per green.

The move to an artificial green has been motivated by a range of factors including:

- An improvement in the quality of artificial playing surfaces

- Lack of suitably skilled greenkeepers to maintain the existing natural surface to an acceptable standard
- The need to provide for the increasing number of casual participants
- Annual cost of maintaining natural greens
- Cost of purchase and maintenance of specialist greenkeeping equipment.
- Access to a constant water supply
- The desire to have a surface able to deliver an extended season or year-round play

Changing Attitudes Towards Artificial Greens

In recent years, players at the competitive / elite level of the sport have been participating in more and more events held on artificial greens and are far more accepting of these surfaces than has historically been the case. There are several reasons for this change of heart including:

- The new carpet surfaces provide a far superior playing surface to the “old” sand based “Astrograss” surface.
- Nationally, Bowls New Zealand are playing more events on high quality artificial surfaces. To participate, players must adapt and accept that play will increasingly be held on this type of surface. Events that may / will be played on artificial greens include:
 - National Open Championships
 - National Intercentre
 - National Interclub Sevens
 - National Interclub Bowls3Five
 - National Champion of Champions
 - Other significant events affected by weather
- Good quality artificial surfaces are wet weather resistant and drain well, allowing play to continue long after a natural green would have become unplayable due to player safety concerns and flooding impacting the ability to play.
- Players involved in national events were recently surveyed post-event and asked, “would you rather play on a good quality artificial surface or a poor-quality natural surface”. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of the former, confirming that the best quality playing surface, whether natural or artificial, should be selected whenever possible.



Facility Upgrades

Several bowling clubs have identified areas within their existing facilities that are requiring attention and have plans to complete these projects in the next 12-24 months. These projects include the installation of solar panels, new ‘see-through’ fences, new kitchens and bathrooms, new furnishings, new roof, new carpark, the addition of a Pétanque piste (court), and the repainting of the clubhouse exterior.

Management Solutions

According to the 2018 census there were 21 clubs that employed a full or part-time (>30 hours) facility manager. This number rose to 30 in 2023 and will continue to rise as clubs become a focal point of their community, requiring key aspects of their operation to be professionally managed.

Towards the year 2030

The large percentage of lawn bowlers in the future are very likely to be consumers who play the game casually, and in shorter formats. The establishment of community clubs throughout the country that provide high quality, all-weather playing and social facilities; alongside other compatible sports and activities, will ensure that bowling clubs remain an important part of New Zealand communities. Good quality community facilities will also provide opportunities for the physical and mental wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

There are presently 460 bowling clubs affiliated to Bowls New Zealand. Most of these clubs provide positive social interaction opportunities for members of the community, many of them aged 65 and over, who may otherwise be lonely and / or depressed and / or lacking physical exercise.

It is important that Bowls New Zealand provides leadership to ensure that these 460 clubs.

- are well positioned to provide a professionally managed facility that provides a safe and welcoming environment for their community,
- are well resourced to upgrade to modern facilities, and
- are open to discussing the opportunity to rationalise their facilities through partnership or amalgamation with other clubs and / or community entities.



The opportunity for our bowling clubs and the game of bowls to not only continue to exist, but also to flourish, is one that is both very real and very exciting. Recognition of this opportunity is already at the forefront of many of our bowling clubs' decision making as they become part of the already changing landscape of bowling clubs and the game of bowls in New Zealand.

For further information please contact:

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