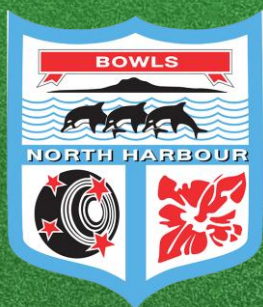




## Bowls North Harbour **Bowls Facilities Plan**

*A study to prioritise bowls facility projects within the Bowls North Harbour district to ensure resources are most appropriately directed to projects that will provide the most benefit for the sport of bowls within the catchment.*

JANUARY 2026



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## 1.0 Background

In 2022 Bowls NH bowling clubs met and, following a needs assessment study, agreed that providing covered greens was a priority for the catchment, with the Sunnybrae Bowling Club site identified as the most strategically located site for a bowls hub and the future potential site for an indoor centre.

The 2024 Bowls NH Facilities Plan reflected the priority agreed by clubs and identified strategically located covered green sites at Browns Bay, Hobsonville Orewa, Sunnybrae and Manly to create opportunities to diversify into new market opportunities and attract people of all ages and abilities to play casual, twilight and competitive bowls.

The 2026 Bowls NH Facilities Plan reports on progress with the Orewa Bowling Club's second covered green project and reprioritises other covered green projects to enable increasingly scarce funding to be directed towards supporting provision of covered greens at strategically located bowling clubs to provide the most benefit for the sport of bowls.

The 2026 Bowls NH Facilities Plan also identifies all the other planned infrastructure projects to ensure the club infrastructure remains fit for purpose. Individual funding plans will be developed to support clubs with securing funding for these projects.

The Plan also identifies all the artificial greens within the catchment area and identifies when they are due for replacement. This will assist future planning, prioritisation and funding of artificial green renewals.

The NZ Sporting Facilities Framework identifies the importance of sporting facilities to help increase participation<sup>1</sup>. The Framework identifies the challenge of facilities throughout New Zealand that are not fit-for-purpose because the sporting code requirements have changed, community standards have changed, or user expectations have changed.

The NZ Spaces and Places Framework discuss the importance of having the right spaces and places in the right locations<sup>2</sup>. The document points to the need for greater innovation with environmental sustainability impacting choices about provision and the importance of fit for purpose play, active recreation and sporting facilities to get greater outcomes for our communities.

The Bowls NZ Facilities Framework identified that facility needs of the sport of bowls have changed, with the need for clubs to provide artificial greens, covered greens and indoor bowling centres throughout New Zealand (instead of or in addition to grass greens), along with progressive governance and management, able to tap into new markets to grow and sustain their clubs through a combination of membership growth and community participation<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The NZ Sporting Facilities Framework, Sport NZ 2014

<sup>2</sup> NZ Spaces and Places Framework, Sport NZ 2024

<sup>3</sup> Bowls NZ 2020-2030 Facilities Plan

## 2.0 Bowls North Harbour Club Analysis

There are nineteen clubs within the Bowls North Harbour Centre from Omaha in the North of Auckland to Belmont Park<sup>4</sup>. Following is information on the clubs, the number of members recorded as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, the number and type of bowling greens:

Club	Full Playing Members	Casual & Twilight Participants	Natural Grass Greens	Artificial Greens	Total Greens	Land ownership
Beach Haven	40	96	1	0	1	Leased
Belmont Park	24	250	0	1	1	Leased
Birkenhead	95	2,048	2	0	2	Owned
Browns Bay	114	2,297	3	1	4	Owned
Helensville	48	162	1	1	2	Owned
Hobsonville	124	1,404	0	2	2	Leased
Mahurangi E.	63	162	0	2	2	Leased
Mairangi Bay	100	736	2	1	3	Leased
Manly	89	1,442	1	2	3	Leased
Milford	76	896	2	0	2	Leased
Northcote	42	728	1.5	0	1.5	Owned
Omaha	80	0	0	1	1	Owned
Orewa	137	2,040	0	3	3	Leased
Riverhead	36	216	1	0	1	Leased
Sunnybrae	52	431	2	1	3	Leased
Takapuna	147	1,752	1	1	2	Owned
Waimauku	20	161	0	1	1	Leased
Warkworth	71	65	1	1	2	Owned
Wellsford	Not available	Not available	0	1	1	Leased
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,358</b>	<b>14,886</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36.5</b>	

In 2024 there was a slight decrease in membership (1,380 in 2022) but an increase in people playing casual and twilight bowls consistent with NZ trends (24,833 in 2022). The trend is towards larger bowls hubs most notably at Orewa, Hobsonville, Browns Bay, and Takapuna attracting significant numbers of casual and twilight bowlers. There are five bowling clubs with membership of 100 or more (6 in 2022).

The number of first year bowlers across all 19 clubs (people joining and playing bowls for the first time) is stable. In 2024 176 joined bowling clubs within the North Harbour catchment for the first time (compared to 177 in 2022). The number of new bowling club members is more in each of the last three years than any single year since the number of new members was recorded, which bodes well for the clubs.

Unfortunately, there are very few student members within North Harbour (although they are playing casual and twilight bowls), and this is an area that requires focus. Bowls is growing in appeal, but younger people are not seeing bowls as a desirable option (in contrast to Australia where bowls is a highly popular sport for students).

<sup>4</sup> Bowls North Harbour Annual Report to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Whilst there will always be a place for bowling clubs in more remote locations to be social centres for their communities e.g. Helensville, Mahurangi East, Omaha, Warkworth and Wellsford, some urban clubs may continue to struggle with numbers and volunteers to deliver casual and twilight bowls programmes. This may mean in future fewer clubs providing higher quality facilities.

### 3.0 Artificial and Covered Greens

Bowls has become both a summer and winter sport which has contributed to stability of clubs with artificial greens. The move towards covered greens is part of an evolutionary process as the sport expands from a primarily membership-based sport played by older people during the day to a sport that encourages and supports development of casual and twilight bowls which can be played at night by younger people.

Bowls NZ predicts as we head toward 2030 that a large percentage of lawn bowlers are likely to be consumers who play the game casually, and in shorter formats. They say clubs that provide high quality, all-weather playing and social facilities, alongside other compatible sports and activities, will ensure bowling clubs remain an important part of New Zealand communities.

Bowls NZ reports changing attitudes towards artificial greens, with players at the competitive/elite level of the sport participating in more events held on artificial greens and far more accepting of these surfaces than has historically been the case.<sup>5</sup> It is expected that over time more grass greens will be converted to artificial greens.

They say that 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. There are now 19 artificial greens at 13 clubs within the Bowls NH catchment.

Provision of covered greens is fundamentally important for the growth of bowls and is a priority in this plan. This is because while traditional membership is reducing, more people are playing bowls, and covered greens provide opportunities to enable more people to play bowls more often.

The move towards covered greens has been motivated by a range of factors including:

- Changing consumer profile and expectations and the need to diversify to meet those needs.
- An increasing number of younger, casual participants who expect a quality, enjoyable playing experience.
- The need to ensure sustainable operations by offering evening bowls programmes on a 12-month basis to meet consumer expectations.
- The impact of the weather on participation numbers – too hot in summer to play on an uncovered green and too wet in spring and winter (and sometimes summer and autumn).
- Disruption of bowls programmes due to wet, cold and windy conditions.
- The opportunity to host regional, national and international competitions.

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<sup>5</sup> Bowls New Zealand Facilities Plan 2020-2030 – Conversion to Artificial Greens

In 2024 there were 123,876 people registered to play casual and twilight bowls in New Zealand. In addition, the number and variety of community and sporting groups adopting their local bowling as their new home has increased significantly. This includes darts, pool, croquet, snooker, fishing, pétanque, dance groups, film, book and other hobby groups and mahjong, bingo etc<sup>6</sup>.

## 4.0 Assessment Criteria for Covered Greens

The priority for development of covered greens was assessed in 2024 and updated and used to inform the March 2025 Bowls NH Facilities Plan, based on the following objective criteria<sup>7</sup>:

1. Strategic location including the population base, distance from the nearest bowling club, the physical location within the catchment area.
2. The number of greens provided and the mix of grass and artificial greens.
3. Shovel readiness including detailed plans, landowner approval (where required), resource and building consents.
4. Capital funding requirements and fundraising plan implementation.
5. Evidence of financial sustainability based on trends over the last 10-year period (this was not updated in 2025).
6. Evidence of membership growth based on trends over the last 10-year period.
7. Evidence of casual and twilight bowls programme growth based on trends over the last 10-year period.
8. Evidence of independent partnerships (separate legal entities using the bowling club for activities).
9. How many carparks are provided on the site (minimum of 40 carparks required for two greens and minimum of 60 carparks required for three greens).

The table on Page 18 summarises the assessments and informs the order of priorities identified for covered greens listed as independently assessed by Freeman Associates Limited with a score from 0 to 5. Weighting has been used to arrive at the scores and applied more specifically to identifying strategically located sites for covered greens included in Section 5.

## 5.0 Priority for Bowls NH Covered Green Projects

The 2024 Bowls North Harbour Facilities Plan identified Orewa as the highest priority for a covered green in a strategically located site. In early 2026 Orewa Bowling Club will officially open their second covered green.

This report acknowledges the grant of \$690,000 from Auckland Council to Orewa Bowling Club which, together with other fundraising, has funded the covered green project at Orewa Bowling Club. The club advise that being a charitable trust was highly relevant to their ability to access grant funding from Auckland Council.

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<sup>6</sup> Bowls NZ Facilities Plan 2020-2030

<sup>7</sup> Bowls North Harbour Facilities Plan, March 2025

The highest priority facility developments within the Bowls NH catchment are for covered greens in strategically located sites as follows (in priority order). Sites are shown on the location map on Page 19. The cost for covered greens is between \$1m and \$2m depending on whether the artificial green is already laid. The cost estimate includes the cover, sides, lighting and sound and assumes a requirement for installation of water tanks and drainage as well as allowing for inflationary pressures<sup>8</sup>.

1. **Hobsonville:** A two green site with space for an additional green with a proposed cover over the Ryman artificial green in a high-density population area. Operating as a multi-use hub with existing partnerships with three retirement villages in the Hobsonville area.
2. **Browns Bay:** A four green site with a proposed cover over an existing artificial green serving the area incorporating Browns Bay, Torbay and Long Bay as a multi-use hub incorporating the Fishing Club and RSA. Browns Bay own their land and can move swiftly to be shovel ready.
3. **Manly:** A three-green site with proposed cover over an existing artificial green within a community that has grown rapidly and is now maturing, with potential for a multi-sport venue to be created at the bowling club.

The reason for prioritising the projects is as outlined above, with four and potential three green sites being preferred over two green sites with additional information as follows.

Hobsonville has a five-year development plan for their site. A feasibility study to cover an existing artificial green has been completed and landowner approval has been granted. This project is listed as a Category B project in the 2024 Tamaki Makaurau Sport & Recreation Investment Plan and will likely progress to Category A when they have completed detailed design and costed architectural plans.

Browns Bay proposes development of a cover over their existing artificial green. They own the land and will apply for a resource consent. They will also apply to Auckland Council to be listed as a Category B project in the Tamaki Makaurau Sport & Recreation Investment Plan.

Manly has received landowner approval for a covered green and their next steps are to raise the funds required to complete a feasibility study, undertake Geotech studies, get resource consent, and complete detailed drawings.

Sunnybrae Bowling Club has received landowner approval for a covered green but has not been reprioritised as they are currently participating in a consultation process over future use of AF Thomas Park. This will be revisited once they know what the future might look like.

Takapuna Bowling Club received resource consent to install a cover over their existing artificial green, and this is valid until 2029. They are currently considering their options but are not identified in this plan as a strategically well-located site. This is because they are a two-green site with no room to expand to a three green site and their carparking is restricted.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on quote received 14.2.24 from Shade Systems Ltd for Sunnybrae site

Not being identified as strategically well located does not mean that Takapuna cannot secure funding to cover their green. They are just not identified as a priority in what is a very tight funding environment.

Each of these sites have challenges, and being identified as strategically well located does not mean that landowner approval will be granted (where required), or that resource and building consents will be granted. It also doesn't mean that the clubs will be able to raise the necessary funds to progress the project, or that the club has the capability and/or sufficient membership to achieve success.

Two further geographic areas are identified as future potential sites for covered greens. A covered green could be provided to meet the needs of the community within the Omaha Beach, Snells Beach and Warkworth catchments (three bowling clubs serve relatively low populated areas but with significant growth predicted at Warkworth). Warkworth has advised their intentions to cover an artificial green at their existing site and are in the early stages of planning.

There could also be an opportunity to provide a covered green to serve the Riverhead, Kumeu, Waimauku and surrounding areas. Riverhead has one grass green, while Waimauku has an artificial green. Collaboration between the two clubs would be needed if a covered green was contemplated in this geographic area.

## 6.0 Other Infrastructure Projects

Clubs have indicated that there several other projects for which they are seeking future funding as follows (priority is given to covered greens in this plan).

### 6.1 Infrastructure Improvements

The priority for infrastructure improvements has not been assessed and is not based on the rating given in Table 1 on Page 19. In alphabetical order the infrastructure projects planned or needed are as follows:

Club	Project	All \$ are estimates
Birkenhead	Upgrade kitchen (self-funded); new shades for both greens; electronic signage board informing the public of events; renovation of bar including installing a dumb waiter from the downstairs cooler room and conversion of a grass green to an artificial green.	\$465,000
Browns Bay	Repair the roof (\$50k raised and balance to be self-funded). Solar panels on roof with 4-5 year payback. Replace leaky front windows (\$14k from local board and balance self-funded). Upgrade the carpark. Cover the artificial green.	\$200,000  \$200,000 \$55,000 \$50,000 \$1.5m
Helensville	The clubroom is over 60 years old and needs renovating – painting the clubroom (last done 15+ years ago); replace the lockers (riddled with borer) provide shelving for storage; upgrade the dining/kitchen areas; replace shelters on the artificial green – too low and a H & S issue; paint the old	\$85,000



	women's clubrooms; install under floor and ceiling insulation to meet the building code.	
Club	Project	All \$ are estimates
Mahurangi East	Planning to extend the clubrooms as a priority project as they have outgrown them.	\$300,000-\$500,000
Mairangi Bay	Currently securing funding to upgrade and maintain the artificial green (damaged by Council trees on the reserve) and upgrade the fence/wind break around the artificial green.	\$40,000
Manly	Proposals for a cover over their green and in future expanding their clubroom to create a Manly Community Sports Centre.	\$1.5m
Milford	Current lease has expired – new 10-year lease to be issued in 2026. Flood mitigation plan includes constructing a bund and replacing the fence & drainage on the western boundary plus a retaining wall to be replaced on the southeast corner. Conversion of one grass green to artificial green	\$207,000 \$330,000 Total \$537,000
Orewa	Carpark extension to meet Council requirements; carpark resurfacing after the roof is completed, fencing the carpark, refurbishing the men's and women's locker rooms and toilets; installing solar panels on the roof to reduce power costs; updating the clubroom furniture.	\$400,000
Riverhead	External cladding, new windows and ranch sliders	\$90,000
Waimauku	A new kitchen and artificial in the bar area is complete; Priority is a disability toilet (2 quotes received); ongoing green and building maintenance.	\$45,000
Warkworth	Provide a cover over an existing artificial green.	\$1.5 million

Future potential sources of funds for **infrastructure improvements** includes Foundation North, Lion Foundation (or other gaming trust funders), local board grant funding, and the NZ Lottery Grants Board.

## 7.0 Artificial Green Renewal

Within the Bowls North Harbour catchment there are 19.5 natural grass greens and 19 artificial greens. The Bowls North Harbour catchment is well served by the current artificial greens, with new artificial greens planned at both Birkenhead and Milford. There is an urgent need for renewal of the artificial green at Wellsford. An enthusiastic group of locals are starting a twilight league and a schools programme. There is a need to plan for renewals of carpet greens when the life of the artificial has expired.

The move to artificial greens was motivated by a range of factors including:

- The need to provide for the increasing number of casual participants accessing the game (grass greens have limited playing time without causing damage).
- The desire to have a surface for all year-round play contributing to sustainable club operations.
- Lack of suitably skilled greenkeepers to maintain the surface to an acceptable standard.
- Annual cost of maintaining natural greens (and environmental impact of chemicals).

- Cost of purchase and maintenance of specialist greenkeeping equipment.
- Access to a constant water supply (and environmental impact of future water shortages).

The life expectancy of an artificial (artificial) green is 15 years, and they currently cost around \$300,000 per green to renew. Renewal may be required earlier than 15 years depending on the intensity of usage and other factors such as flooding.

On this basis the following priorities for renewal of artificial greens have been identified:

<b>Club</b>	<b>Installation Year</b>	<b>Renewal due date</b>
Wellsford	Approx 2000	Poor condition - overdue
Waimauku	2014	2029
Orewa	2016	2031
Mairangi Bay	2017	2032
Takapuna	2017	2032
Sunnybrae	2017	2032
Belmont Park	2018	2033
Warkworth	2013	2033
Browns Bay	2019	2034
Mahurangi East No. 2	2019	2034
Manly	2019	2034
Omaha Beach	2021	2036
Manly	2022	2037
Hobsonville No. 1	2023	2038
Helensville	2023	2038
Orewa	2024	2039
Mahurangi East No 1	2024	2039
Hobsonville No. 2	2024	2039

## 8.0 Return on Investment

Bowls NZ has identified that consumers are more likely in future to be people who play bowls casually, and in shorter formats<sup>9</sup>. Casual participation in the sport of bowls is increasing, with younger people seeking out opportunities to play a casual, non-contact sport in a fun, social environment. Providing fit for purpose facilities is essential to leveraging opportunities to increase the return on investment.

Bowls membership in New Zealand is bucking the trend by increasing when other sports are losing members. In 2024 there were 37,359 members (a 2% increase from the previous year). First year membership increased from 1,425 in 2020 to 1,850 in 2024<sup>10</sup>.

Casual participation throughout New Zealand is also increasing exponentially, with 101,000 in 2020 and 123,876 in 2024. These are people who come to the club to have a go or who are part of corporate bookings where bowls is featured.

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<sup>9</sup> Bowls NZ Facilities Strategy

<sup>10</sup> Email from Bowls NZ Club Development Manager, Martin Mackenzie, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The number of young people/Rangatahi playing bowls in New Zealand has steadily increased over time. In 2010 3,828 participated in some form in our sport, and in 2024 that number has risen to 9,901.

The increase in casual and twilight bowls participation is possible because of the evolution of bowling club facilities, with artificial greens and covered greens contributing to that growth, and more younger people becoming involved with the sport.

Within the Bowls North Harbour catchment there were 13,538 casual (non-member) participants at bowling clubs during the 2024 playing season. There are significant opportunities for additional growth, but the sport is constrained by the quality of facilities provided – while there are 18 artificial greens which meet the needs of the sport, there is only one covered green provided at Orewa to enable winter and summer and evening use of the green in all weather conditions.

Orewa is an example of the impact that a covered green can have. Orewa opened their covered green in February 2020. In 2021 (the first year of operation) Orewa Bowling Club recorded 170 casual participants, in 2023 they recorded 1,000 casual participants, and in 2024 they recorded 1,960 casual participants. Orewa Bowling Club anticipate increasing to 5,000 casual participants per annum once the second cover is installed.

Grass greens are expensive to maintain and are not sufficiently robust to enable casual participants to play on them because of the damage that is caused through dumping of bowls on the green which damages the surface. Casual participation has been made possible through provision of artificial greens and has been elevated by providing covered greens to provide all-weather access including night play.

## 9.0 Targeted Population Groups

Bowls is a universal game with 60 member nations affiliated to World Bowls including migrant groups to New Zealand such as China, Fiji, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, PNG and Iran. Migrant participation has been slow to infiltrate the New Zealand bowls scene, but a Japan day at Takapuna bowling club was very successful and Asian open days are planned in future (Harbour Sport will assist with these events).

The disability sector is very engaged with the sport of bowls, with national and world bowls events (including the Commonwealth Games) incorporating Para bowls teams. Graham Skellern from the Takapuna Bowling Club represented New Zealand in the 2022 Para Bowls team at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, UK. The International Bowls for the Disabled organises, fosters and promotes world bowls events for physically disabled and visibility impaired bowlers.

In 2021 Takapuna Bowling Club hosted the national championships for para bowlers (all national championship events include a section for para bowlers). The event attracted entries from people in wheelchairs, people with one arm, with one leg, with no legs, with vision impairment and a range of other disabilities. The sport is also very good for people who are neuro diverse (the repetitive nature of bowling to a set routine).

Photo 1: Para Bowls is played at all Commonwealth Games, National and International events



Within New Zealand, Aotearoa Māori Bowls has 1.5 million followers, and Māori are fully integrated as part of the sport. Shannon McIlroy (Ngāti Porou) is an international bowler who has represented New Zealand at several events. McIlroy has won a world bowls medal and represented New Zealand four times at the Commonwealth Games.

On home soil we have the famous Nathan family with Father Peter, and siblings Millie and Chad playing out of the Birkenhead Bowling Club. Millie and Chad have won numerous bowls awards (as did Peter in the past) and in future will feature in the race for national titles. In 2024 Millie won the World Champion of Champion singles title while representing Tonga at an event hosted by the Browns Bay Bowling Club.



Bowls is a popular sport for young people around the world. School participation is also rising exponentially throughout New Zealand, with 4,358 individuals participating in bowls in 2020 and 9,900 individuals participating in bowls in 2024. Once again this has only become possible because there are artificial and covered greens.

Selina Goddard started playing bowls while at college and is now aged 31. She won a bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games and two bronze medals at the 2022 games in Birmingham. She was the 2023 New Zealand singles champion, participated in the World Champion of Champions event in 2024 and won a Team Gold and a bronze medal at the 2023 World Bowls Championships.





Most recently, Selina was named by World Bowls as the world number one ranked female player. At the inaugural World Bowls Cup held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2025 Selina reached the quarterfinals of the singles event and won a silver medal in the pairs event.

## 10.0 Indoor Bowling Centre

The next evolution in bowls facilities developments is fully enclosed (indoor) greens. The NZ Bowls Facilities Framework identified that there are several capital improvement projects underway throughout New Zealand, with five fully enclosed 8 rink indoor facilities:

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

Additionally, Bowls NZ reports there are now several fully enclosed stadiums with less than 8 rinks as follows:

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

There is no indoor bowling centre within the North Harbour catchment. The nearest indoor bowling centre is in Pukekohe, with restrictions on who can access the greens within the Pukekohe Cosmopolitan Club environment. For the North Harbour catchment, it will be essential that an existing club or clubs sell their land and invest in an indoor bowling and multi-sport centre for the future of the sport, or the dream is unlikely to be realised.

Bowls North Harbour has identified the importance of long-term future planning that incorporates a modern fit-for-purpose indoor/outdoor centre that will also incorporate other community and sports activities, aligned with the Sport NZ and Bowls NZ facility strategies. This addresses several opportunities identified by the bowling community to achieve growth<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> Bowls NZ Facilities Plan 2020-2030

- Showcases bowls as a modern, progressive, and accessible sporting activity.
- Provides opportunities for more people to play bowl – competitively and socially.
- Available when younger people and those still in the workforce can play sport.
- Provides opportunities to introduce new people to the sport.
- Provides an all-weather venue for 12 months of the year.
- Avoids North Harbour events limiting opportunities for clubs to host events.
- Creates a space where clubs can come together to play bowls and socialise.

Photo 2: International event at indoor centre in Naenae – NZ, Canada, Malaysia, Scotland, Cook Is



The **vision** is for a fit-for-purpose high-quality indoor bowling and multi-sport centre capable of hosting world and national bowls events as well as meeting local needs.

The **purpose** is to provide a facility that is fit for purpose and encourage a new generation of bowlers to participate in the sport of bowls in an entertainment style venue contributing to growth of the sport of bowls within the North Harbour catchment.

The objectives for an indoor bowling are as follows:

- The indoor bowls centre is the 'go to' place on the North Shore for fun, friendly social interactions in a multi-sport environment.
- At least 2,000 members using the facilities on a regular basis.
- The facility generating profit that can be reinvested in facility maintenance and enhancements.
- The venue hosting national events annually, and world bowls events as often as possible.
- A televised Bowls premier league to be based at the indoor centre.

The preferred site for an indoor bowling centre is occupied by Sunnybrae Bowling Club which is in close geographic proximity to 6 of the 19 bowling clubs affiliated to Bowls North Harbour. The site has many advantages including an existing artificial green over which the indoor centre could be built, two grass greens which would be retained (in future one could be artificial and covered) and a clubroom which could be refurbished to include a commercial kitchen and bistro to meet future needs.

The land is owned by Auckland Council and leased to the Sunnybrae Bowling Club. The lease with Sunnybrae Bowling Club expires in 2031. The club has 58 carparking spaces allocated to it and there is space on the site to add a further 50 carparks on land adjacent to the Takapuna Golf Club land which is part of A.F. Thomas Park. On occasions when the Event Finder Stadium is not being used the parking is limitless.

An opportunity to develop the Sunnybrae site is unlikely to come around again. If the Sunnybrae site is lost (there is currently a consultation process to establish which sport and recreation groups will in future be located at AF Thomas Park) there are no alternative three green sites on which to locate an indoor bowling centre, a covered green and a grass green at a single location.

Auckland Council requires bowls to give up some land they can repurpose for community use to secure a long-term lease on the Sunnybrae site (either when the lease expires in 1931 or a new lease is issued prior). Auckland Council deems it essential that bowls partners with other community and sports clubs to create a sports hub (potentially croquet, pétanque, archery and Youthtown (archery and Youthtown are already established at A.F. Thomas Park)).

The Sunnybrae Bowling Club site suffered minor damage to the artificial green in the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023 floods. Surrounding businesses and sports facilities suffered considerable damage but all facilities within the Sunnybrae area are now fully restored and operational. While Auckland Council will carry out mitigation on the Wairau stream this is being treated as a 100-year flood by all other sports venues within the catchment.

A study into the feasibility of providing an indoor bowls and multi-use centre will be undertaken at some future time with the focus now on covered greens and ensuring artificial greens are maintained in good condition (maintenance of grass greens is supported by local funding).

The study will assess whether an indoor bowling centre is feasible on Sunnybrae based on a range of factors, including a geotechnical study, design, capital cost, operational income and costs, multi-use opportunities, lease renewal, planning rules and regulations.

Aligned with the prioritisation criteria developed by Aktive Auckland Sport and Recreation for investment in sport and recreation facilities, the following will need to be demonstrated:

- **People impact** including the scale of participation (likely to be based on case studies of indoor centres such as Naenae Bowling Club in Wellington) and partnership and collaboration – more than just a bowling club.
- **Network impact** including importance of the site and operational sustainability.
- **Project impact** including complexity and do-ability and the legal structure for owning and operating the facility.
- **Strategic impact** including engagement with Manu Whenua, environmental impact and site resilience.

## 11.0 Bowls North Harbour Strategic Plan

The broad role of Bowls North Harbour is to lead the development, growth, and delivery of bowls within the catchment and provide leadership on issues. Bowls North Harbour is providing leadership on the indoor centre proposal aligned with its identified value of ‘providing a positive vision for the sport and promoting change where needed’.<sup>12</sup>

Bowls North Harbour has a difficult but very important role to play in leading discussions around investment in indoor and/or covered greens to reinvigorate the sport and generate growth aligned with their strategic plan.

The latest strategic plan is for the 2017-2020 period (the Strategic Plan needs to be updated). The Strategic Plan identifies several drivers for change as follows:

- Fast moving technology and communication methods.
- Declining administrative depth and strength in some clubs.
- Progressively declining traditional membership numbers.
- An ageing membership (impacting on volunteer availability).
- Reduced revenue streams from sponsors and funders.
- Competition from other sports.
- A new generation of players seeking a sporting/entertainment experience on a ‘pay for play’ basis in a short time frame – unwilling in most cases to commit to traditional membership, formal dress codes and historical playing times and formats.

The Strategic Plan identifies several initiatives to address the drivers for change including club rationalisation with discussion on amalgamation of clubs as necessary. Bowls North Harbour has an important role to play in leading these discussions, but as bowling clubs are incorporated societies the decision lies with the members who, experience shows, are reluctant to make changes even when the evidence is very clear that amalgamation would be beneficial for the club and the sport of bowls.

Bowls North Harbour and its affiliated clubs have identified that inclement weather causes significant disruption to not only Bowls North Harbour championship events, but also to the ability of clubs to plan and deliver, on an uninterrupted basis, their own championship events. While they are searching for solutions e.g. reducing the number of events, an indoor stadium or covered greens would enable Bowls North Harbour and clubs to increase the range of events provided.

## 12.0 Sport NZ Facilities Framework

The NZ Sporting Facilities Framework identifies the importance of sporting facilities to help increase participation<sup>13</sup>. The Framework identifies the challenge of having facilities throughout New Zealand that are not fit-for-purpose because the sporting code requirements have changed, community standards have changed, or user expectations have changed.

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<sup>12</sup> Bowls North Harbour Strategic and Operations Plan 2017 - 2020

<sup>13</sup> The NZ Sporting Facilities Framework, Sport NZ Strategy Document



Sport NZ is responsible for ensuring there are more kids playing and enjoying sport, more adults participating and getting involved and more Kiwi winners on the world stage<sup>14</sup>. The Framework report highlights the importance of sporting facilities in increasing participation. They believe that if the right sporting facilities were provided, then more New Zealanders would be enabled and encouraged to take part in sport.

Sport NZ say there are many challenges to overcome.

#### **Gaps and duplications:**

Sport NZ says that when clubs and codes make decisions in isolation, we end up with too many of one kind of facility and not enough of another. The Bowls North Harbour Facility Plan clearly identifies facility improvements needed to retain members while planning to attract a new demographic of younger people to the sport.

#### **Facilities that are not fit-for-purpose:**

Sport NZ says that for one reason or another we end up with facilities that are no longer suitable. The first bowling club in New Zealand opened in 1861. Introduction of artificial greens was an important innovation. Covered or indoor bowling centres are next generation innovations that are important for the future of bowls as they enable a new demographic to access bowls.

#### **Facilities we cannot afford:**

Sport NZ says that while often communities find the money to build a facility, they struggle with ongoing operational and maintenance costs. Many bowling clubs reach a point where they are unable to generate sufficient money to maintain and improve their clubrooms and greens and make them attractive to the community. A planned approach to facility development will ensure the right facilities are provided in the right places to enable growth to occur.

## **13.0 New Zealand Spaces and Places Framework**

The NZ Spaces and Places Framework is based on the Sport NZ Facilities Framework and talks about the importance of having the right spaces and places in the right locations to enable and encourage participation and support sporting excellence. They say that as activity preferences change, we need to 'catch up and keep up' to respond with a variety of quality active environments and flexible facilities our communities need.

They say that greater collaboration and innovative thinking is required, in what now is a leaner fiscal environment. This report responds to those sentiments by clearly identifying priorities for growing the sport of bowls.

## **14.0 Disclaimer**

Bowls North Harbour Incorporated, Freeman Associates Limited and any other individual or organisation involved in the preparation of the Bowls North Harbour Facilities Plan, are not liable for any loss, injury or damage arising to any organisation or individual from the use of this report.

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<sup>14</sup> The New Zealand Sporting Facilities Framework, a strategy report from Sport NZ

**Table 1: Bowling Club Assessments**

Club	Strategic Location	Greens	Shovel ready	Capital funding	Financial trends	Membership trends	Participation trends	Partnerships	Carparking	Total
Hobsonville	5	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	39
Browns Bay	5	5	3	2	4	4	5	5	4	37
Manly	3	4	0	1	5	3	4	5	5	30
Mahurangi East	3	3	0	4	5	3	4	4	4	30
Mairangi Bay	3	4	1	0	5	4	4	5	4	30
Takapuna	4	3	5	3	5	4	4	0	2	30
Sunnybrae	5	5	3	0	4	2	2	2	5	28
Riverhead	4	2	0	0	5	2	3	2	3	21
Birkenhead	3	2	0	2	3	3	3	2	2	20
Warkworth	4	2	0	3	2	3	1	2	3	20
Milford	2	3	0	0	3	3	4	0	3	18
Omaha Beach	3	2	0	3	5	5	0	0	0	18
Beach Haven	3	2	0	0	4	3	3	0	2	17
Belmont Park	3	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	11
Wellsford	3	2	0	0	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	3	9

The assessment score of 0 – 5 for Greens is based on the number of greens and the mix of artificial and grass greens (P4 specifies the actual number of greens).

## Bowls North Harbour club location map

-  Beach Haven Bowling Club
-  Browns Bay Bowling Club
-  Helensville Bowling Club
-  Hobsonville Bowling Club
-  Mahurangi East Bowling Club
-  Mairangi Bay Bowling Club
-  Manly Bowling Club
-  Milford Bowling Club Inc
-  Northcote Bowling Club
-  Omaha Beach Bowling Club
-  Bowls Orewa
-  Riverhead Bowling Club
-  Sunnybrae Bowling Club
-  Takapuna Bowling Club
-  Waimauku Bowling Club
-  Bowls Warkworth
-  Birkenhead Bowling Club
-  Belmont Park Bowling Club
-  Stanley Bowling & Petanque Club INC
-  Bowls Wellsford

