

CASE STUDY BOWLS OREWA COVERED GREENS

Bowls Orewa, which is affiliated to Bowls North Harbour, opened their first covered green in 2020. This was so successful that they opened a second covered green in 2026 – the only bowling club in New Zealand with two covered greens. How did they do it, and what can other bowling clubs learn from their experience?

Following is a summary of learnings from the Bowls Orewa that can be applied by other bowling clubs:

1. Have a clear vision and a commitment from members to provide a covered green and put 100% effort into achieving the vision.
2. Projects are long term – expect up to 6 years from start to finish (Orewa took less time for their second green because they were committed, well organised, and had money in the bank).
3. Undertake a needs assessment/feasibility study and business case. Clearly articulate the increased income streams over the long-term you anticipate from having a covered green and the annual maintenance cost of a covered green (the return on investment).
4. Get the membership behind the project – be prepared for detractors and through development of a business case prove the project is resilient and achievable.
5. Form a project team - get the right people on the team – people with the right skills and the time and energy to drive the project – finance, engineering, general management, administration.
6. Engage early with Auckland Council and Aktiv who will guide you on the Sport & Recreation Facilities Investment Fund process aligned with the Bowls NH Facilities Plan.
7. Explore the benefits of registering as a charity – this helped Orewa get across the line with their funding (Auckland Council could claim a tax credit on a donation to a charity).
8. Choose the right contractor early in the project – a contractor who has a record of excellence and will become part of the team and assist with the consenting process.
9. Get Resource Consent early (it will be live for 5 years). This will include visual, noise, parking and environmental impact assessments. If Auckland Council won't grant RC, or the conditions make the project not feasible, you need to know (cost around \$30,000 – this is a pre-construction cost and not part of the contract price for the cover).
10. The building consent process includes a site assessment to understand the ground conditions impacting design, including geotechnical engineering and design (cost around \$70,000 – this is a pre-construction cost and not part of the contract price for the cover).
11. Auckland Council required Orewa to provide stormwater drainage including detention tanks - be aware of unexpected costs and be prepared to fund them.
12. Have a clear vision for how the project will be funded and any parameters around that funding (the feasibility study will inform this understanding).
13. As the project progresses apply to Class 4 funders for project components e.g. lighting, sound, scoreboards, etc and to NZ Lottery Grants Board for 2/3 of the project cost (subject to getting funding from Auckland Council).
14. The project must be shovel ready before an application for funding will be approved for Category A funding through the Auckland Sport & Recreation Facilities Investment Fund.
15. Keep an eye on the prize – be resilient, be committed, be persistent and you will get there.

You will need to go through each of the following steps. Auckland Council officers (Mike Thompson) and Aktiv (Danny O'Donnell for the north and west area and Jamie Archibald for the East and the South of Auckland).

Aktiv Project Categorisation

CATEGORY B BEING EXPLORED (4-6 YEARS)		CATEGORY A ADVANCED PROJECTS (1 – 3 YEARS)	
COMPLETED Needs assessment or feasibility – a level of investigation to provide information about the project	COMMENCING Funding process Concept design Cost estimate Project Plan Landowner approval and tenure (lease)	COMPLETED <i>Needs assessment Feasibility study/business case Processed or received landowner approval and tenure Project design (concept design) Recent cost estimate</i>	COMMENCING <i>Appointed technical team Project plan Project risks identified Technical investigation Resource Consent Funding Process</i>

Impact on Membership and Participation

The impact of having a covered green can be seen in the following membership census information for Bowls Orewa:

Year	Full Playing Members	Limited Playing Members	Twilight members	First Year Members	Non-Playing Members	Casual Participants
2019	188	10	0	12	125	438
2020	218	0	84	25	47	170
2021	161	93	0	37	56	0
2022	178	150	48	21	152	1,000
2023	161	177	72	37	222	2,240
2024	137	198	80	32	242	1,960
2025	166	159	70	40	160	939*

Note that Orewa categorises all club members who do not participate in inter-centre events as Limited Members. The conversion rate from limited to full playing members is high as shown in the table.

* The Green was not available during construction of the canopy with reduced activity over that time period.

Sustainable Programming

Bowls Orewa programmes bowls so that income is generated through bowls activities requiring fewer volunteers in comparison to corporate bowls that requires many volunteers.

in February 2026 net income of \$7,864.00 was generated from bowls activities. This was recorded after the opening of the second covered green. This income does not include bar sales, house raffles, cash donations, centre or corporate greens hire.

Day	Competition format	Average No teams entering
Mondays	2-4-2 games	32 teams pay \$10 per person
Tuesdays	3 bowls triples	32 teams pay \$10 per person

Wednesdays	Roll Up	60+ pay \$3 per person
Thursdays	2 or 3 bowls triples (4 games)	24–26 teams pay \$10 per person
Saturdays	Roll Up	60+ pay \$3 per person
Sundays	Scroungers 40+	40+ pay \$6 per person

Weekly competitions are thriving with current numbers as above (all competition participants pay \$10 each with 50% of income paid as prizemoney):

While most club members are available to play during the day, the club also has many members who are working during the day. The club is currently exploring opportunities to provide weekend competitions.

Covered Green Maintenance Costs

There are costs associated with a cover over a green (as there are with an artificial green) that you should be aware of. Shade Systems publishes a maintenance care pack. This includes (in summary) the following:

Self-Maintenance that includes visual checks for vandalism, trees and plants touching the canopy, mould, moss and lichen growth, salt deposits forming on the steel, birds and spiders, excessive movement, structural integrity, wear and tear, loose or missing fastenings.

The underside and lower parts of the canopy will need to be cleaned regularly, and the canopy needs a regular service so that the warranty will not be compromised. Structural inspections must be completed every 4 years.

Shade Systems advises the metal structure should be checked and maintained annually in a coastal environment (2 yearly in a non-coastal environment):

Shade Systems advises the top (\$4,000) and underside (\$4,000) of the PVC should be cleaned and maintained every two years – total cost \$8,000.

Orewa's Story

Orewa is a beachside suburb with a population of 3,290 but with surrounding suburbs of Milldale and Millwater providing a population of 11,960 and the adjoining population of Whangaparaoa of 38,680¹. The bowling club sits within a cluster of other sports and community facilities; it has prominent main roadside visibility and access; and very good parking.

The vision for a covered green came from member Peter Clark who travelled to Australia and witnessed the covered bowling greens in that country, and he sold the vision of a covered green to members. In 2016 Peter arranged for a concept design to be drawn up – an artistic impression of what a covered green at Orewa could look like, and the membership supported the idea.

Orewa at the time had three bowling greens – one grass green and two carpet greens. The grass green was the feature green immediately in front of the clubroom. There was discussion about which green to cover, but members didn't want to forfeit the grass green, so it was decided to cover the artificial green on the southern side.

¹ Statistics New Zealand 2025 census data

Tony Rickerby was President at the time and knew bowls inside and out as an experienced greenkeeper and bowler, and he was ably supported by Peter Clark and the club committee and was able to drive the project and access funds (the right team was in place with the right skills).

Getting the right design and the right contractor was the first challenge with the first green, necessitating a change of contractor and design which caused delays. Then the club started applying for grants, and had money in the bank, and got to a point where the work could proceed. However costs had escalated, and Auckland Council was concerned about uplift of the canopy due to high winds.

As a result, the size of the columns was increased, and steel was put in the foundations – all over engineered in the opinion of the engineers within the club. When the unexpected additional costs arose, a benefactor came along and provided a loan of \$200,000 (repaid before the start of the second green), Ryman Healthcare took up a naming rights options for \$80,000 including GST for which the club was most grateful, and the project went ahead and was completed in late 2019 at a total cost of \$700,000.

The following contributed financially to successful completion of the first roof which was officially opened on 13th February 2020:

- Auckland Council
- Blue Sky Community Trust
- Lion Foundation
- NZ Community Trust
- NZ Racing Board
- North & South Trust
- Pelorus Trust
- Ryman Healthcare

In 2020 the entire Board stood down. A new Board under Peter Clark as President and David Batchelor as Treasurer was elected at the AGM. Later that year a vote was taken to convert the grass green in front of the clubhouse to an artificial green - the vote was lost! The club hit speed bumps.

In 2021 David Batchelor was appointed Chairman of the Board and also Chairman of the New Roof Project Committee and he did a cost benefit analysis and identified that the grass green in front of the clubroom was rarely used, compared to the carpet greens, and demonstrated the value of converting the grass green to an artificial green and presented this to the members.

David provided the cost of maintaining a natural green, that could only be used for a very limited time each year, and this persuaded most members to agree to the converting the grass green to an artificial green (proxy votes were counted to give everyone a chance to vote). The membership was given assurances that all funding would be in place before starting work and there would be no borrowing outside of the debentures.

Meanwhile, use of the existing covered green was increasing. The combined retirement villages held a highly successful event on the green. A Tuesday competition was established, and a competition for years 1 – 8 players was very successful. The competitions became so popular that they spilled out onto the uncovered green, with ‘competition’ for playing on the covered green versus the uncovered green. The success of the covered green drove talk about providing a second covered green.

And then COVID struck and everything changed, with grant funding diverted to recovery and resilience projects. Alternative funding was therefore required so the club went to the members and raised \$437,000 in debentures at 4% return with those providing \$10,000 or more exempt from membership fees during the period the debt was owed.

With the club running at an annual profit of \$100,000 - \$150,000 there was money in the bank and an assurance of future cash flow, sufficient to start the foundations and earthworks works and Tiger Turf were contracted to remove the natural grass, dispose of the toxic soil, put down a hard surface underlay and fit the artificial green.

An unreliable contractor caused two years of delays, and in the end, payments were withheld until drainage work was completed and a negotiated settlement was agreed. However, resource and building consents were secured during this time.

The building consent process is critical. This includes an assessment of stability of the land by geotechnical experts and influences the depth of the foundations needed to ensure stability and has a big influence on design including whether weight needs to go underground or above ground. A firm quote on supply and installation of the canopy cannot be provided until the building consent has been finalised.

The January 2023 floods caused Auckland Council to rethink flood mitigation, and the Club was required to install a 25,000-litre detention tank for the new covered green project and retrospectively was required to provide 3 x 10,000 litre detention tanks for the original covered green. All this came at a cost that the club was able to meet.

In 2022 Auckland Council and Aktiv put in place a new non-contestable fund for priority facility projects. A requirement for non-contestable funding was for each sport to develop a facilities plan that clearly identified the sports own priorities.

A facilities planning process, facilitated by Fay Freeman, Freeman Associates Limited, across all the 19 clubs within the Bowls North Harbour area, identified that the highest priority within the region was for strategically located covered greens. The highest priority project was a second covered green at Bowls Orewa.

In 2023 an application was made to the Auckland Council Sport & Recreation Facilities Fund for a significant contribution towards the covered green project. This was unsuccessful as the completed facilities plan was not submitted to Auckland Council on time.

In 2024 a second application was made to Auckland Council resulting in a \$600,000 grant, and this funding along with the club's own funds and the debentures from members, enabled the club to proceed with the work. Shade Systems from Dargaville was the contractor on the job and the club spoke highly of their professionalism and workmanship.

The second roof was opened on 7th March 2026.

The total cost of the covered green project, including drainage, earthworks, laying the artificial green, engineering, lighting, electrical and other works was \$1,543,413.05. This was funded through Auckland Council (\$600,000), funding from other sources (\$80,000), donations \$10,844.51 and debentures from Orewa Bowls members (\$437,000) and Bowls Orewa own funds (\$416,568.54).

The club acknowledges the following funders who contributed to the cost of developing the artificial green and the second roof.

- Auckland Council
- Dragon Community Trust
- TAB NZ
- North and South Trust
- NZ Community Trust

Bowls Orewa was able to access the payments from Auckland Council because they were shovel ready – land approval had been granted, resource and building consents were in place, full funding was in place to complete the project, and the contract was let. This was the result of very good financial control at every step of the way by the club's Treasurer David Batchelor.

Bowls Orewa's registration as a Charity in January 2023 was also helpful in helping Auckland Council decide to grant funding to the club. Registration enabled Auckland Council to claim the donation as a tax rebate.

Payments from Auckland Council were made progressively as the project progressed, and regular Project Control Group meetings were held throughout the project that included an Auckland Council representative.

The club employs no staff, but when corporate events are held the corporate pays for bar staff and cleaning staff. Orewa Bowls has the usual sub-committees, including match committee, selectors, etc and a very strong volunteer base.

Bowls Orewa has a pétanque club adjoining the clubrooms who use the building annex 3 days per week plus two tournaments annually. There are around 100 members who are all social members of the club.

Bowls Orewa acknowledges Peter Clark for his initial vision firstly to cover one green and then the second, Tony Rickerby for his vision and the knowledge and skills he brought to the club for the first green, David Batchelor, Chairman of the New Roof Project Committee, Laurie Kean who was President in 2024-2025 and gave 100% support and got the members behind the project, and backroom support from members Colin Reeve as Project Manager, Neil Taylor as Consultant Engineer and Alf Stamp who kept track of all the accounts.

Orewa Bowls acknowledges the following Orewa Bowls members who bought debentures to enable the covered greens to be provided:

David Batchelor, Michael Baxter, Carol Brambley, Bruce Donnelly, Ray Brown, Val Brown, Peter Clark, Tony Clark, Kaz Creaghan, Richard Green, Wendy Green, Chris Hewitt, Carol Hollows, Paul Hollows, Maurice Hulme, Grant Loe, Stuart McDonald, Bev McDonald, Allan McQuoid, Chris Markham, David Mellor, Linda Mellor, Les Miley, Bruce Oughton, Sharon Parker, Trevor Parker, Shirley Paton, John Pike, Colin Reeve, Barbara Sadgrove, Kevin Sadgrove, Bill Spearey, Pat Stewart, Mark Tabor, Beryl Truebody, Bert Visser, Mal Wallace, David Wood, Leonie Wood, Ann Yearbury, Greg Yalavich. Sadly, two of the first members to take out debentures, Kaz Creaghan and Bruce Donnelly did not live to see the result of their confidence in the project.

Researched and written by Fay Freeman ONZM, with considerable input from David Batchelor, Orewa Bowling Club

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