

9. FLAT-WATER MULTI SPORTS FACILITY – LAKE ISAAC

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The purpose of this report follows a request from the Chairmen of the Strategy and Finance Committee and the Community and Leisure Committee to update the Council on progress of the proposed flat-water multi sports facility - Lake Isaac.

AN INITIATIVE BY ROWING

Lake Isaac began as a proposal by Canterbury Rowing to develop a world class rowing lake in Christchurch. Canterbury Rowing initiated this action with the knowledge that rowing has outgrown its current venue at Kerr's Reach. Canterbury Rowing has now formed a charitable trust (Christchurch International Rowing Centre Charitable Trust – CIRCCCT) to drive the project. It should be noted that the Leisure Manager is a trustee of CIRCCCT.

CIRCCCT has identified that there are a number of other passive water sports that would benefit from such a venue and the proposal has broadened to become a world class, flat-water sport and recreation facility.

It is clear that rowing and other passive water sports such as canoeing, dragon boating, outrigger canoeing, triathlon and open water swimming will not grow in Christchurch unless such a facility is established. Beyond sport there is the potential to cluster a number of related activities by adding recreational, health and fitness and educational services. These may include bridle and walking paths, a cycle track, jogging track, and outdoors and water safety education. Lake Isaac also has the potential to be a centre of excellence for elite flat-water training.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The land on which the lake is to be formed (274m wide x 2,500m long x 4.0m water depth) is owned by the Diana Isaac Wildlife Trust. CIRCCCT has an agreement to rent the land on a 99 year renewable lease. This is a significant beginning to the project, with an estimated saving of \$1.8 million through not having to purchase the land.

In its 2002/03 Annual Plan the Council approved funding to assist the project of \$100,000 in 2002/03, \$100,000 2005/06, \$200,000 in 2006/07 and a further \$200,000 in 2007/08.

- A concept plan has been developed by CIRCCCT and endorsed by Rowing New Zealand, FISA (Federation Internationale des Societes d'Aviron) and Sport & Recreation New Zealand (SPARC).
- The Airport Company and CIRCCCT have jointly undertaken a bird strike assessment. The independent study prepared by Eco-Sure (environmental consultants based in Australia) provides mitigation measures and acceptable bird levels to maintain the strike risk at a tolerable level. A positive way forward has therefore been identified for CIRCCCT to develop the lake.
- Presentations have been made to Community and Leisure Committee of the Christchurch City Council, to Hon Trevor Mallard (Minister for Sport & Recreation), to Marion Hobbs (Minister for Environment), to SPARC Executives and local SPARC Board members.
- A \$50,000 funding contract has been entered into with the Ministry of Economic Development, Hon Jim Anderton, for the preparation of an economic feasibility study. The first instalment of \$10,000 has been received and the remaining \$40,000 will be forthcoming on completion of the study.
- Initial engineering and environmental investigations have been successfully completed.
- To date \$267,000 has been invested of which \$220,000 is funded, the balance being services gifted. There are no unfunded debts outstanding.
- Preliminary estimates are that the facility, fully developed to the required international standard, could cost over \$23 million to complete.

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

A very strong economic impact study has been drafted, and has been circulated for comment, prior to being completed this month. This is being prepared by APR Consultants based in Rotorua, the same group Christchurch City Council Leisure uses for its economic impact assessments. They report:

- *“From comparison with other facilities and events there is evidence to suggest that Lake Isaac would have significant positive economic impact on Christchurch City, the wider Canterbury Region and New Zealand.*
- *Annually the lake could expect to attract to Christchurch City an extra 10-12 national sporting events. The extra annual expenditure in Christchurch associated with these events is assessed to be in the order of \$3.5 million, which is equivalent to the evaluation of an extra 45 to 50 new jobs. (FTE's)*
- *In addition Lake Isaac as a world class facility is capable of attracting major international competition for several passive water-sports and multi sport events.”*

International economic benefit for an event like the World Masters Rowing Championships, based on FINA World Masters Swimming could have a return to the city in the range of \$7 million to \$11 million.

ISSUES/OBSTACLES TO RESOLVE

A major obstacle faced at present is the need to progress detailed design for the lake, in order to make a robust application to Environment Canterbury for resource consents to excavate into the flood plain.

The design process could involve trial excavation pits on the site in order to establish a final sustainable lake level. The lake may be reliant on using natural silts and sediments to seal the gravels in order to maintain the lake level. The lake design is needed therefore for the resource consent application, and to refine the capital cost estimates.

Protection from flooding is another issue to resolve before resource consent can be sought. CIRCCT is aware of discussions between the Diana Isaac Wildlife Trust and Environment Canterbury to enhance the primary defence system, and is dependent on a satisfactory outcome.

SUMMARY

It is without doubt an ambitious project. It is, however, a project with considerable goodwill and energy. It is an essential project if rowing and other passive water sports (non-motorised) are to be sustained in Christchurch.

The Leisure Unit is currently developing a Recreation and Sport Facility Strategy, aimed at identifying and prioritising the city's major recreation and sport facility needs. The Strategy's steering group has identified a passive flat-water sports facility as a high priority, a view supported by an independent peer review of the strategy process. Strategy priorities were determined using various criteria to evaluate the sport and recreation issues facing the city, which were identified during the strategy development process.

WHERE TO NEXT?

There are three critical time frames.

1. The preparation of the application for the necessary resource consents and the resource consent process - estimated cost \$1 million (approximate), and may take one year.
2. The physical digging of the lake, banking, levelling, testing – estimated cost \$12 million (approximate), and may take three years.
3. The associated necessary amenities – estimated cost \$11 million (approximate), and may take one to two years.

It is difficult to gain financial support for the resource consent and design process, and without that the project could flounder.

A significant signal for prospective investors/sponsors would be to have the financial support for the resource consent process and to establish the lake.

The viability of the total project rests with these two obstacles that require either local government or central government help.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Council endorse its support for this project and the Leisure Manager continue to update the Community and Leisure Committee on progress.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the Annual Plan Subcommittee be asked to consider favourably any submissions received on this project.