

5. APPLICATION FROM “EVENTING CANTERBURY” TO ESTABLISH AN EQUESTRIAN CROSS COUNTRY COURSE AT CANTERBURY PARK

Officer responsible Greenspace Manager	Author Rod Whearty, DDI 941-6510, John Allen 941-8699
--	---

The purpose of this report is to enable the Board to comment upon an application from Eventing Canterbury to construct a number of jumps on Canterbury Park (formerly the A&P show grounds site) for the purpose of staging major equestrian events. This report is also being considered by the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board and will then be placed before the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee for a decision. Officers are recommending that Council grant Eventing Canterbury a Licence for a term of five years with a right of renewal for a further five years.

BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Members will recall that the Council purchased 89ha of “Canterbury Agricultural Park” from the A&P Association in March 2001. The former A&P site has boundaries adjoining both Nga Puna Wai and Templetons Road Reserve. Purchase of the A&P site has provided a significant open space extension to the area as well as providing a continuous connection that links the two previously existing reserves.

The total area (including the two previously existing reserves) is approximately 145 hectares (358 acres), the area being bounded by the Heathcote River, Curletts Road, Wigram Road and the boundaries of the Aidenfield subdivision and land owned by Musgroves Limited.

LEGAL ISSUES

Canterbury Agricultural Park is made up of seven parcels of land, all vested in the Council under the Local Government Act 2002, or Reserves Act 1977.

The Council is able to grant a licence over land held under the Local Government Act 2002 under the powers of general competency. The Council is also able to grant licences over recreation reserves under section 54 of the Reserves Act 1977, subject to publicly advertising its intention to grant a licence, and obtaining the Minister of Conservation’s approval. There is an esplanade reserve along the edge of the Heathcote River, which is located along the south boundary of the reserve. Officers will recommend that no permanent jumps are sited within this reserve, the main purpose of which is to allow the general public access along the river.

EVENTING CANTERBURY ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CURRENT EVENTS

Eventing Canterbury is the local organising committee of Eventing New Zealand, which is the New Zealand Equestrian Federation’s (NZE) organising body for the sport of eventing. The NZEF is the governing body for competitive equestrian sport in New Zealand, with all four Olympic disciplines under its control.

Eventing Canterbury currently run five events a year: three at McLeans Island and two on private farm land in North Canterbury.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY

Initially, Eventing Canterbury would like to establish a “one star” and “two star” course. These are the two lowest of four internationally recognised standards of course difficulty. Two star represents a significant challenge to both horse and rider, offering a very exciting visual opportunity to spectators.

A good two star course would enable Eventing Canterbury to submit an application to the governing body to stage national competitions such as National Rider One Day Championships. Currently, all of these events are held in the North Island due to the lack of suitable venues in the South Island.

Ultimately, Eventing Canterbury proposes to establish a three star course, this being the highest level of difficulty of any course in New Zealand. This would enable it to compete with Auckland and Taupo for the right to stage the most elite national and international competitions held in New Zealand.

Initially the group would like to hold two or three major events at the park each year. Normal events take place on a Sunday, however, a major national event is usually run over two to three days, ending on a Sunday.

The group's application seeks to establish a course within the park consisting of approximately 23 jumps or obstacles. The proposal is to build approximately 10 - 12 permanent jumps, the remainder being "mobile" jumps that will only be in place for the duration of an event.

The combination of permanent and mobile jumps allows for the course to be regularly altered to ensure competitors do not become over familiar with the course, and to ensure that it provides the appropriate level of challenge for horse and rider.

SITE SUITABILITY AND COMPATIBILITY OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The Greenspace Unit has been progressively developing the park since purchase in 2001. There is on-going budget provision within the Greenspace five-year Capital Works Programme to continue the development of the park in future years.

Canterbury Park already has a strong equestrian base through the presence of Christchurch Riding for the Disabled, Halswell Pony Club and the Christchurch Polo Club being established in the park.

Eventing Canterbury's proposal complements the existing activities upon the site, being compatible with the rural theme of the park, which is central to the development concept of this park.

The proposed location of the permanent jumps has been given careful consideration by the Council's Senior Landscape Architect, who has been involved in the course layout and placement of permanent jumps. The openness and rural flavour of the site will be maintained and preserved through the use of mobile jumps within the more open parts of the park.

The permanent jumps will be integrated into the landscape by taking advantage of the natural contours of the site and locating them within existing fence-lines or adjacent to gateways where possible. Additional landscaping associated with the overall park development will be placed around these features, thereby further assisting to integrate the jumps into the landscape.

Eventing Canterbury is also very supportive of this environmentally conscious design approach, because this provides opportunities to create a more challenging and interesting course for horses and rider.

The association of horse riding within the new park is considered to be a sound proposal complementing the existing outdoor arena, stables and cross-country course already established in the park.

WHY CANTERBURY PARK ?

Canterbury Park is already recognised as a highly valued site with regional significance for both urban and rural communities alike. The site already has a strong equestrian theme and offers a range of exciting opportunities for equestrian-based activities, having substantial infrastructure already in place to support these activities.

There is no other single site in the South Island that can match what Canterbury Park offers in the one convenient location. Existing facilities, such as the Canterbury Riding for the Disabled 80m x 50m indoor pavilion, 150 covered stables and associated infrastructure belonging to the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association, and provision for extensive on-site car parking, are all located within 145 hectares of open space.

Another factor favouring the site is that the park is within 15 minutes' drive of the international airport. This is significant, particularly in terms of attracting national and international riders to future events, particularly when the three star course is constructed.

PREVIOUS CONSULTATION

Eventing Canterbury representatives have been working with staff on their proposal for some time prior to the formal application being lodged. The general concept of a major equestrian course being situated in the park has received favourable discussion and feedback at previous community workshops attended by key stakeholders and interested local residents.

An indicative course outline has also been shown on previous plans circulated in newsletters to local residents keeping them informed on progress in developing the park. A number of local residents have taken the opportunity to sit and enjoy a recent cross-country event hosted by the Halswell Pony Club.

FUNDING AND SECURITY

Eventing Canterbury has secured funding to construct the jumps, however, these funds will not be released until the group can show that it has received formal approval from the Council to construct and develop the course.

The total cost of the course is estimated to be between \$80,000 and \$100,000. Eventing Canterbury is therefore applying for a licence to ensure that its proposed investment in the park is secure. Staff are comfortable with this approach, as numerous other groups and organisations with infrastructure on Council-owned or controlled parks have their tenure of these sites secured by leases or licences. Staff propose that a ten-year licence (five years plus a right of renewal for a further five years) be granted.

The jumps will be predominantly constructed of natural materials with a life expectancy of approximately ten years. The proposed licence term therefore provides the appropriate level of security required by Eventing Canterbury while allowing Council flexibility to investigate other options in the future, should the anticipated growth and demand for the course not eventuate.

COST TO COUNCIL

Some minor landscaping will be undertaken around the permanent jumps to assist with their integration into the park environment. The necessity for these plantings is not part of this application, but rather part of the on-going development of the park. Extensive planting within the park is programmed over the next few years, which will continue irrespective of the outcome of this application.

The proposed course is predominantly in the "rural" section of the park. This part of the park is primarily managed and maintained by the grazing of sheep. It is unlikely there will be additional costs to Council as a result of the current application. Any potential costs are likely to be minor in nature, and able to be accommodated within the existing capital and maintenance budget provision for the park.

PROPOSED LICENCE

Part of the proposed course is within the area that the A&P Association have an agreement to occupy exclusively for a period of one month during the annual "A and P Show". Eventing Canterbury acknowledges that the Association have rights over this area during that month. Eventing Canterbury's licence agreement with the Council will recognise Council's previous commitment to the A&P Association for their exclusive use of the Park during that month.

Staff propose that Eventing Canterbury be granted a licence to establish a cross-country equestrian course at Canterbury Park subject to the terms and conditions listed below:

1. Public notification.
2. Approval by the Minister of Conservation.
3. No permanent jumps are to be erected upon the esplanade reserve adjacent to the Heathcote River.
4. Eventing Canterbury is not to erect any permanent jumps or structures on the site without prior consultation with, and approval of, the Greenspace Manager or her designate.
5. All permanent jumps, or structures erected upon the site are to be built according to the New Zealand Equestrian Federation's rules and regulations. Were necessary, a building consent shall be obtained before building commences, or a structural engineers certificate obtained once built.
6. Eventing Canterbury may erect temporary jumps or structures (that do not require a Building Consent, or Engineers Certificate), upon the site without the prior approval of the Greenspace Manager as part of their course layout, providing the jumps and/or structures are set out just before, and removed at the end of the day or event, and the area is restored to its former condition.
7. Eventing Canterbury is to maintain all permanent or temporary jumps and structures in a safe and tidy condition at all times.
8. The licence agreement is to include a clause, that Eventing Canterbury indemnifies the Council and its servants from all claims or demands of any kind, and from all liability in respect to any damage or injury occurring to any person or property as a result of their activities upon the site.

9. Eventing Canterbury is to show proof to the Greenspace Policy and Leasing Administrator that it has a \$1,000,000 public liability insurance policy that covers the organisation for the use of the public ground allocated. The policy is to be kept current throughout the entire licence period.
10. The Council reserves the right to alter the area allocated to Eventing Canterbury from time to time to recognise changes in recreational needs and use of the area.
11. The licence is to have a clause inserted in it, which recognises that the A&P Association has exclusive rights over part of the area during the month of the show.
12. No permanent advertising is to be placed on any of the jumps or structures.
13. This approval will lapse if development of the course has not been substantially completed within two years of final approval being obtained.

CONCLUSION

Eventing Canterbury's licence application is compatible to existing activities already established at the park, and complementary to the overall vision that the Greenspace Unit believes to be appropriate for the park.

Developing the A&P area for multi-use equestrian activities will give the sport a central base and identity in the city similar to other sports such as soccer and rugby etc.

The site provides a wonderful opportunity to create an exciting interface between urban and rural lifestyles that is easily accessible to people with disabilities as well as the wider community.

Eventing Canterbury's proposal provides a unique opportunity for local residents and other park users to enjoy and experience an equestrian event at the highest level, close at hand, which they may not otherwise have access to under normal circumstances.

For some members of the urban community this may be the only opportunity they get to experience a rural "element".

Staff

Recommendation: That the Board recommend to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee that Eventing Canterbury's application for a licence to construct an equestrian cross-country course on Canterbury Park be approved under the powers of general competency contained in the Local Government Act 2002, and pursuant to section 54 (1) (c) of the Reserves Act 1977 for a period of five years with a right of renewal for a further five years, subject to conditions 1 to 13 as outlined in the report.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion.