

2. 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 consider an application from Eventing Canterbury to construct a number of jumps on Canterbury Park (formerly the A & P showgrounds site) for the purpose of staging major equestrian events. The report will seek to grant Eventing Canterbury a licence for these events for a term of five years with a right of renewal for a further five years.

BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Councillors 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, and Wigram Road down to the boundary of the Aidenfield subdivision and land owned by Musgroves Ltd.

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 the 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 of granting a licence, and obtaining approval from the Minister of Conservation. There is an Esplanade Reserve along the edge of the Heathcote River, which runs along the south boundary of the reserve. Staff recommend that no permanent jumps are to be 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 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 coming under its control.

Eventing Canterbury currently run five events a year, three at McLeans Island and two on private farmland in North Canterbury.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY

In the first instance Eventing Canterbury would like to establish a “one star” and “two star” course (refer attached plan). These are the two lowest of four internationally recognised standards of difficulty. Two star represents a significant challenge to both horse and rider and offers spectators the opportunity to view a higher standard of competition.

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 these events are held in the North Island due to a lack of suitable venues in the South Island.

Ultimately, Eventing Canterbury has aspirations of establishing a three star course, which is the highest level of difficulty of any competition 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.

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

The application seeks to establish a course within the park consisting of approximately 23 jumps or obstacles. The proposal is to have around 10-12 as permanent jumps with the remainder being "mobile" jumps that will only be in place for the duration of the event.

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

SITE SUITABILITY AND COMPATIBILITY OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

Since purchase in 2001 the Greenspace Unit has been progressively developing the park with ongoing budget provision in the Greenspace 5 year Capital Works Programme to continue the development.

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

Eventing Canterbury's proposal complements the existing site and is compatible with the rural theme and existing activities that are central to the development concept of this park.

The proposed location of the permanent jumps has been given careful consideration through the Council's Team Leader - Landscape being involved in the course layout and placement of the 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. Additional landscaping associated with the overall park development will be placed around these features which will further assist the jumps to blend into the landscape.

Eventing Canterbury is also very supportive of this environmentally conscious design approach as this provides opportunities to create a more challenging and interesting course for horses and rider while at the same time giving the appearance of being part of the natural landscape.

The association of horse riding in the new park is considered to be a sound proposal complementing the existing outdoor arena, stables and cross country course already established on the site, an example being the Christchurch Riding for the Disabled Association.

The Christchurch Riding for the Disabled Association (CRDA) is an association of volunteers who fund, provide facilities and organise therapeutic riding programs for people of all ages with a wide range of physical, intellectual and mental disabilities.

In 1997 the Christchurch Group of CRDA identified a need to expand its facilities, which could not be done upon its present site. A Lotto funded feasibility study quantified the demand for therapeutic riding in Christchurch and identified the criteria for relocation and expansion of its existing facilities. Since 1997 the committee has looked at several relocation options, the option that best satisfies the criteria, being the Canterbury Park site.

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 and has a 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 Riding for the Disabled 80 metre by 50 metre Indoor Pavilion, 150 covered stables and associated infrastructure belonging to the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association, provision for extensive onsite car parking and the fact that all this is located within 350 acres of open space.

Another factor favouring the site is the fact that park is within 15 minutes of an international airport. This has significance 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 talking with staff about their proposal for some time prior to the formal application being lodged. The general concept of a major equestrian course has received favourable discussion and feedback at previous community workshops made up of 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 relation development of the park. A number of local residents took the opportunity to attend 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 approval from the Council to construct and develop the course.

Given that the total cost of the course is calculated at somewhere between \$80,000 and \$100,000 the group is seeking a licence as a form of security for their investment on the site. Staff are comfortable with this approach as there are numerous other groups and organisations on Council parks that have security of tenure through 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, therefore the proposed term provides the appropriate level of security for the group while at the same time still leaves future options open for the Council if the anticipated growth and demand for the course does not eventuate.

COST TO THE COUNCIL

Some minor landscaping will be undertaken around the permanent jumps to assist with integrating the structures within the park environment. These plantings are not driven by the current application but are simply part of the ongoing development of the park. Extensive planting within the park is programmed over the next few years and this will be unchanged 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 through the grazing of sheep. There will be no additional costs to the Council as a result of the current application. Any potential costs are likely to be minor and can 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 for a period of one month during the period of the annual "A and P Show". Eventing Canterbury acknowledges that A & P have rights over this area during that month. Eventing Canterbury's Licence Agreement with the Council will recognise the Council's previous commitment to the A and P Association.

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.

CONCLUSION

Eventing Canterbury's licence application is compatible to existing activities already established on the grounds and complementary to the overall vision that the Greenspace Unit believes to be appropriate for this site.

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, right on their back door, 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".

This report was considered by the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board at its meeting on 4 May 2004 and by the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board at its meeting on 5 May 2004. Both Boards supported the application for a licence to establish a cross country equestrian course at Canterbury Park subject to the terms and conditions listed below.

Recommendation: That the Council approve the granting of a site use licence to Eventing Canterbury under the powers of general competency contained in the Local Government Act 2002, and under section 54 (1)(c) of the Reserves Act 1977 for the establishment of permanent jumps along a cross country equestrian course at Canterbury Park for a period of five years with a right of renewal for a further five years subject to the following conditions:

1. Public notification as required by relevant legislation.
2. The agreement of the Minister of Conservation being obtained for the proposal.
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, and where required shall have a building consent if applicable, or a structural engineer's certificate.
6. Eventing Canterbury may erect temporary jumps or structures (that do not require a building consent, or Engineer's 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 stating 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 its activities upon the site.
9. Eventing Canterbury is to provide evidence to the Greenspace Policy and Leasing Administrator that it has a \$1,000,000 public liability insurance policy covering the organisation for the use of the public ground allocated to the organisation. 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 to contain a clause 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 the development of the course has not been substantially completed within two years of final approval being obtained.