

4. SKATEBOARDING, INLINE SKATING AND FREESTYLE BMX CYCLING

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The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the current state of skateboarding, inline skating, and freestyle BMX cycling in Christchurch.

BACKGROUND

The Draft Skateboarding, Inline Skating and Freestyle BMX Cycling Strategy was prepared in 1999. Since then, skateboarding, inline skating and freestyle BMX cycling have continued to grow in popularity both as competitive sports and as recreational activities. They are global activities, and with increasing levels of professionalism, commercial sponsorship, and large amounts of capital investment involved, they are not likely to be a passing fad. Skateboarding, inline skating and BMX cycling fit the mould of modern recreation trends in that they are:

- Informal, casual activities that people can participate in at any time and in a wide variety of places
- Available to all levels of skills, abilities, ages and genders
- Activities that people can do alone or in groups
- Relatively inexpensive
- Exciting and fun with a progression of skill development

They are also useful modes of transport and provide fitness and social benefits to participants.

Skateparks can now be found in many cities and small towns throughout New Zealand. Christchurch currently has 15 skate parks, which are fairly evenly distributed around the city. They can be found at Bishopdale Park, Brooklands Domain, Cypress Garden Reserve, Hoon Hay Park, Jellie Park, Linwood Park, Sheldon Park, South New Brighton Domain, St Albans Park, Templeton Domain, Thomson Park, Wainoni Park, Waltham Park, Washington Reserve, and Wycola Park. Gaps in provision can be identified in both the Halswell and Sumner areas. An analysis of the facilities shows:

- They mostly cater for ramp style skating.
- There is a lack of street skating facilities.
- The facilities are mostly of an intermediate level.
- There is a lack of both advanced facilities and easy beginner facilities.
- The facilities are mostly of a medium size.
- There is a lack of large metropolitan facilities that cater for a variety of styles and abilities, though Washington Reserve goes some way to filling this gap.
- There is a lack of small, local facilities where young children can safely develop their skills close to home. Facilities such as that being developed at Wainoni Park are targeted at this level.
- There are no indoor facilities in Christchurch.

The main inline skating area is at Hagley Park. Inline skaters are also able to use the skateparks, as are scooters.

BMX bikes are allowed on skateparks. Jellie Park is particularly popular for BMX bikes for performing tricks. In addition, there are nine dirt BMX tracks in Christchurch, which cater for a different style of riding and racing using different bikes. There are three club run facilities at Bexley Reserve, Burwood Park, and Kyle Park, four mini tracks at Craighead Reserve, Crosbie Park, Flay Park, and on Council land behind Beckenham Service Centre, and two dirt freestyle BMX tracks with jumps at Victoria Park and Bottle Lake Forest Park. A future facility is proposed at Nepal Reserve extension.

Media attention on skate facilities has tended to focus on negative aspects, which can lead to the public perception that these facilities create problems. This has not assisted with promoting increased public awareness or empathy for youth recreation needs and currently there is a significant imbalance between the general public perception of the issues associated with these types of facilities and what actually exists in reality. The task of establishing these facilities on our parks is always going to be challenging while many of the current public misconceptions remain in the community.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT SKATEBOARDING, INLINE SKATING AND FREESTYLE BMX CYCLING STRATEGY

A number of actions were recommended in the 1999 strategy. These are listed below together with their current status.

Short Term Priorities:	Status
Objective 1: Complete works planned for 99-00 year	
Complete Stage 2 and 3 of Washington Reserve	Stage 2 completed, Stage 3 budgeted for 2007/08
Skate facility at Jellie Park	Complete
Skate facility at Linwood Park	Complete, minor additions and improvements planned
Permanent ramp at St Albans Park	Complete
Upgrade of facilities at Hoon Hay	Resurface complete and rail added
Upgrade Thomson Park and resurface	Resurface complete and new features added
Objective 2: Tune Existing Facilities into the demands of users and potential users	
Regular maintenance to remove broken glass and fix vandalism, and to clear Hagley Park skate path	Parks are on regular weekly maintenance and rubbish removal regimes and are often checked more frequently by contractors working on site. Reported issues are responded to promptly.
Upgrade pathways in Hagley Park	Ongoing
Install a second inline skating path elsewhere	No specific path has been installed, but many of the shared use paths are suitable. Investigations are underway for Sumner Promenade upgrade.
Vertical ramp at Washington Reserve	Proposed in Stage 3
Objective 3: Provide greater support for and promotion of skate facilities	
Support activities to optimise facility usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publicity pamphlet • Skate jams • Events for Inline skaters and freestyle cyclists using portable ramps • Skills development and female skater groups • Enhanced safety at skate venues and code of etiquette • Support inline hockey providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlet produced and info available on the web. • Leisure Unit continues to run a number of successful skate jams, competitions and events. • Portable ramps are often used at community events and skate jams, which also cater for inline skaters. • Skills workshops have been run. Female instructors have been promoting female skating and a programme for women is being investigated. • Youth workers have undertaken some work in both Linwood and Jellie Park. Unwritten codes of etiquette are strongly evident amongst skateboarders. BMX bikes are allowed on skate parks but mountain bikes have been found unsuitable. • Feasibility study required for facility.
Medium Term Priorities	
Objective 4: Develop street elements at existing facilities	
Incorporate street elements into existing facilities and design into future facilities	Street elements have been added to Washington Reserve, Wainoni Park, St Albans Park, Templeton Reserve, Hoon Hay Park, Thomson Park, Brooklands Domain, Wycla Park

Longer Term Priorities	
Objective 5: Develop new skateboarding and extreme inline facilities	
Richmond-Shirley	St Albans Park may meet much of this need. Skate facility in MacFarlane Park has been deferred for consideration with park renewal.
Aranui-South Brighton	Second stage of a small local facility in Wainoni Park is due this year. Some skate items have been installed in South Brighton Domain.
Parklands	As a result of extensive community consultation, this will not proceed
Central city	Need being met at Washington Reserve
Objective 6: Development of freestyle BMX facility, subject to demand	Freestyle BMX bikes are able to use skateparks. Dirt jumps provided at Bottle Lake Forest Park and Victoria Park
Objective 7: Skate Routes	
Develop safe skate routes with City Streets and the Pedestrian Strategy	Issues re perceived conflict between pedestrians and skaters still to be addressed.

FUTURE FACILITIES AND FUNDING

Demand for new facilities far exceeds the resources available. Skate facilities continue to be identified by research as a high priority youth recreation need, eg Leisure, Parks and Waterways Studies 2002-2003, Fendalton-Waimairi Youth Consultation 2002/03, Skateboarding in Burwood Pegasus Report to the Board 2002, Report on the Parklands Youth Consultation Process 2002, Youth Initiative Facilitator's Report: Proposals from Young People 2002. Priorities have been identified locally and include further improvements and additions to Thomson Park, Jellie Park, Linwood Park, Hoon Hay Park, MacFarlane Park, and Kyle Park.

The Greenspace Unit has approximately \$120,000-\$170,000 allocated annually to youth recreation facilities. This funding is for **all** youth facilities across the city and has been tagged for identified projects for the next five years. Skateboarding, skating and BMX facilities must be balanced with other recreation needs. A number of existing skate facilities require upgrading and safety improvements before new facilities can be constructed. Included in the budget allocation is completion of the Wainoni Park skate facility (2003/04), improvements to Linwood Park skate facility (2004/05), upgrade of Craighead Reserve BMX track (2005/06), Stage 3 of Washington Reserve (2007/08), additions to Thomson Park skate facility (2008/09).

Although skateboarders all desire a skate facility in their own local neighbourhood, many appear to be very mobile and can travel between facilities. Variety between these facilities is important to provide new challenges and interest. Young children, however, are not able to travel to skateparks outside of their neighbourhood and require supervision. There is a need for more small, safe, local facilities to cater for beginners and young children. As the skill levels of skateboarders continues to rise, so too does the demand for more advanced facilities. Washington Reserve has the potential to provide variety and challenge to skateboarders as a large metropolitan facility upon completion of Stage 3.

There is the possibility of one or more skate clubs becoming operational in the future. Such clubs would be far better positioned than the Council to cater for the needs of their members and could have the flexibility to provide portable facilities that can be changed regularly, and also supervision and coaching. Such clubs are to be encouraged. BMX riders have been very active in helping to develop the facilities at both Bottle Lake Forest Park and Victoria Park. Clubs are also involved in three other BMX facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Skateboarding, inline skating and BMX cycling continue to grow in popularity, and skill levels continue to increase. Implementation of the 1999 strategy has largely been successful and is nearing completion. Demand for new facilities exceeds the resources available to provide them and therefore future provision must be prioritised. Upgrading and improvement to some existing facilities is needed before new facilities can be constructed. There is high demand for small local facilities, improvements to existing facilities, as well as a need for a challenging metropolitan facility.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.