



Hockey in New Zealand Spaces and Places Strategy 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the development of the 2016 National Facility Strategy, Hockey New Zealand (HNZ) has transformed significantly. In 2022, HNZ launched the ‘Taking Our Game Forward’ National Strategic Direction, focusing on opening and growing the game and guiding the community towards this new vision.

To successfully ‘open and grow’ the game of hockey, HNZ needs to examine the Connected Hockey Network carefully. HNZ defines its Connected Hockey Network as where and how it sustainably organises and participates in hockey in order to meet the needs of a wide variety of New Zealanders and realises its strategic outcomes. The Connected Hockey Network encompasses the following:

- The places and spaces where we can participate
- The formats/versions we play and the opportunities on offer
- The people we need to organise and deliver our opportunities

The first phase of the Open and Grow the Game strategic priority is the refresh and renewal of the current National Spaces and Places Strategy, focusing on alternatives to the centralised model and traditional facility thinking.

The approach to the 2024 National Hockey Spaces and Places Strategy (the Strategy) is a departure from previous strategies, there is a desire to have a more holistic view of hockey participation and to make the sport accessible to all, which means hockey in New Zealand needs to take a different approach. A change in the way the game of hockey is delivered will enable its community to realise its new direction.

KEY FINDINGS

PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Hockey in New Zealand sees a strong base of young players, with the majority in the primary school age bracket. Despite this, the sport faces challenges in maintaining participant satisfaction, as indicated by a slight decline in the Net Promoter Score. The rising membership in hockey associations and steady growth in the School Sports Census reflect a positive trend in participation

SPACES AND PLACES CONTEXT

Hockey in New Zealand faces significant challenges with the over-specification of its turfs for community use, inadequate facility amenities, high provision costs, and a notable lack of sustainability awareness. With only a small fraction of the population engaged in elite hockey, the focus on high-performance turfs is not only disproportionate to participation needs but also financially and environmentally unsustainable. Addressing these issues requires a strategic re-evaluation to better align the facilities with community needs and 'open and grow' the game.

“Kids are playing on the equivalent of Eden Park for hockey.”

Andy McLean, Otago Hockey

SUSTAINABILITY CONTEXT

Hockey in New Zealand faces significant sustainability challenges that require urgent attention. With only one hockey association having a sustainability plan, the sport is ill-prepared to tackle the environmental issues posed by water-based turfs, microplastics, carbon emissions, and inundation. Additionally, the financial sustainability of maintaining and operating hockey facilities is a major concern, with high operational and disposal costs. Developing comprehensive sustainability plans and adopting environmentally friendly practices are essential steps toward ensuring the long-term viability and environmental responsibility of hockey in New Zealand.

“Watering a hockey field does, however, come at a cost, both financially and environmentally, and it is increasingly being recognised that this is no longer a sustainable policy for hockey. Therefore, the FIH has challenged the synthetic turf industry to develop hockey turfs that retain the desired characteristics, but without using water.”

FIH

OWNERSHIP MODEL

Hockey in New Zealand operates under diverse and mixed ownership models, including turf trusts, councils, schools, and hockey associations. Most hockey associations do not own their facilities directly, relying on land provided by third parties, often at minimal cost.

Turf trusts, as not-for-profit entities, play a crucial role in subsidising costs through third-party funding, which helps reduce expenses for users.

Councils and schools are particularly significant in this landscape, providing facilities that are more community-focused and aligned with International Hockey Federation (FIH) turf recommendations. The high level of commitment to sustainability, both environmental and financial, by both councils and schools, positions them as key contributors to the growth and long-term success of hockey in New Zealand.

There is no single best practice model, as each ownership model has its own strengths and weaknesses.

However, the key elements to ensure the success of any ownership model are:

- **Strong Relationships and Aligned Vision:** Building strong relationships and ensuring that vision and values are aligned, along with strategic direction are key to success.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensuring financial sustainability for the hockey community is essential, ensuring the full life cycle of turfs and venues has been costed.
- **Accessibility and Affordability:** Preventing barriers to entry and keeping hockey as affordable as possible is vital for widespread participation.

CHALLENGES, STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Hockey is often seen as a sport for the white middle class, perceived as insular and unwelcoming to newcomers. It is also considered less accessible and more expensive than other team sports, partly due to the belief that it requires resource-intensive, centralised facilities.

While HNZ and the hockey community are proud of the gender balance hockey achieves in participation, there is still work needed to improve diversity and inclusion in participation, coaching and administration, making hockey in New Zealand truly representative and welcoming to all.

Following stakeholder interviews and analysis of insightful survey responses in the development of this Strategy, it has become evident that the game of hockey confronts a series of pressing issues and challenges. The summary below encapsulates the pivotal concerns and obstacles that have been identified through these investigative processes.

The Challenges



STRENGTHS

In contrast to some of hockey's challenges, hockey stands out for its commitment to gender equity, offering a platform where both men and women can compete and excel equally. As an innovative sport, hockey continually adapts its game and rule formats to enhance accessibility and excitement. Innovations such as smaller game formats and the removal of the offside rule have modernised the sport, making it more engaging for players and spectators alike.

These strengths underscore hockey's progressive approach and its ability to adapt and respond to the nations' communities.



OPPORTUNITIES

Through stakeholder engagement and analysis of hockey association facilities survey data, a number of opportunities have been identified aimed at mitigating the challenges currently confronting the hockey community.

From initiatives promoting different hockey delivery models and surfaces to sustainable practices and partnerships, these opportunities present a roadmap for overcoming obstacles and steering the hockey community towards a sustainable future.



STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been crafted to establish a comprehensive framework that prioritises opening and growing the game, fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and community involvement in terms of facility provision.

These principles will:

- Drive decisions based on achieving the best possible overall outcome
- Ensure investment decisions will provide the best 'bang for buck'.
- Best match supply with demand.
- Help decision-makers understand and manage risk.
- Ensure decisions are made with the best available information so all parties understand costs and benefits.
- Build trust with stakeholders through showing credibility, legitimacy and responsibility in planning and prioritisation of needs.

The following principles have been derived from conversations with HNZ and the Project Steering Group and key strategic documents utilised throughout this review.

STRATEGY PRINCIPLES



'Open & Grow the Game'

Promoting accessibility, inclusivity, diversity, and equitable access to hockey.



Meeting an Identified Need

An evidence-based approach to identifying needs, ensuring adaptable and appropriate solutions.



Connected Networks

Partnering and collaborating to ensure spaces and places are well used, maximising return (social and financial) on investment.



Sustainability

Develop and operate sustainable provisions and practices encompassing environmental and economic dimensions.



Social Value of Hockey

Promotes and develops positive impacts on individuals, communities, and society, beyond the realm of physical health, contributing to New Zealander's well-being.



Engagement with Mana Whenua

Ensure the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is recognised and upheld.



SUPPLY & DEMAND

NATIONAL SUMMARY

In developing the national summary and individual association dashboards, various key indicators were examined to provide the hockey community with a comprehensive view of its landscape.

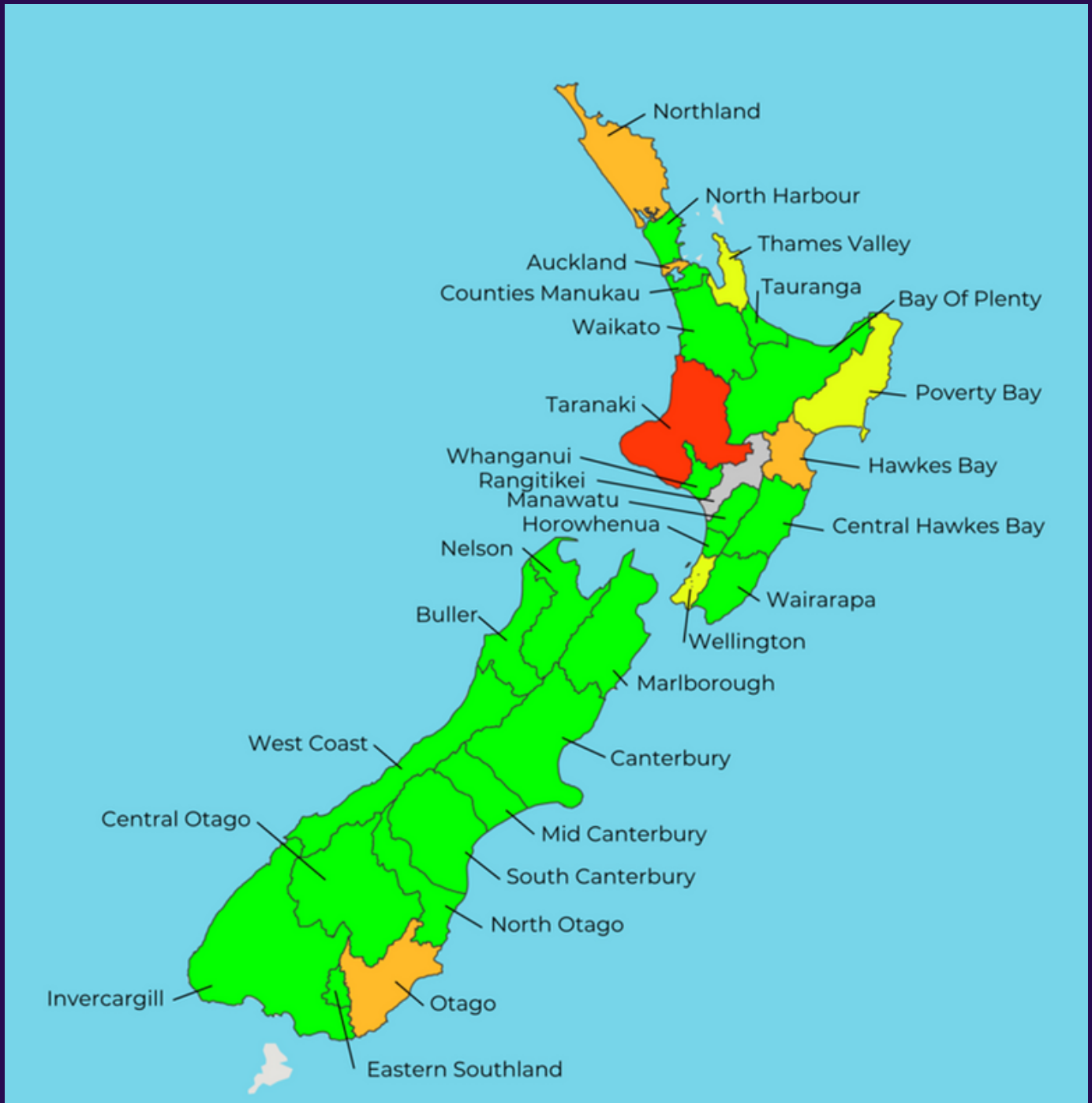
The national map and association dashboards are designed to reflect the challenges, opportunities, and principles outlined in this Strategy. The map and dashboards encompass several critical areas, including:

- **Membership Participation and Categories:** Tracking current and forecasted participation rates across different membership categories to monitor growth and engagement within the community.
- **Turf Capacity:** Assessing supply, availability, and demand for turfs to ensure adequate resources for training and competitions.
- **Venue Information:** Detailing locations, ownership, age, renewal schedules, development plans, and sustainability initiatives for hockey venues to support strategic planning and resource allocation

The National Summary Map 2023 presents a summary of national information using a traffic light system that has been employed to categorise the 32 hockey associations, with colours indicating different levels of demand and required action:

- **Red:** Demand threshold met or exceeded, likely requiring immediate action.
- **Orange:** Demand parameter approaching the threshold, planned action should be considered.
- **Yellow:** Pressure is increasing, suggesting the need to begin investigating future options.
- **Green:** No obvious areas of concern
- **Grey:** No data

NATIONAL SUMMARY



National Summary Map 2023[1]

[1] No data was available for Malvern, Rangitikei and Ruahine-Dannevirke



SUPPLY & DEMAND

The majority of Associations, over 75% in New Zealand, are categorised as green, indicating no immediate concerns, demand and capacity are currently within the optimal range.

- Taranaki is classified as red, indicating the demand has been met and actions are required to investigate options.
- Auckland is classified as orange, with increasing pressure necessitating investigation into future options. This does not include future developments, such as Colin Maiden and The University of Auckland.
- Three areas, Northland, Otago and Hawkes Bay, are identified as orange, nearing the threshold where planned action should be considered.
- Three areas, Thames Valley, Poverty Bay, and Wellington, are classified as yellow, indicating pressure is increasing.

The association dashboards provide additional information that helps understand the specific challenges faced by the seven associations categorised under yellow, orange, and red.

ASSOCIATION DASHBOARDS

The Association dashboards provide a summary of some key information that directly relates to the principles of the strategy, including financial and environmental sustainability, membership information, playing age brackets, population data for now and the future and turf availability.

In developing the association dashboards, various key indicators were examined to provide the hockey community with a comprehensive view of its landscape. By covering these areas, the dashboards aim to provide valuable insights and facilitate informed decision-making for the hockey community.

To effectively cater to the distinct needs of each region, it is advised to undertake comprehensive, localised facility planning utilising the Association dashboard as a starting point. While the regional summary data provided in this National Strategy offers valuable insights, it cannot replace the necessity for detailed, association-level analysis to precisely identify and address the unique priorities of each area prior to initiating any projects.

WAY FORWARD

Hockey New Zealand's primary goal is to expand the reach and inclusivity of the game, rather than increasing the number of premium hockey turfs.

The focus is on broadening participation and introducing hockey to new and diverse communities. This involves exploring innovative ways of playing the game, creating varied environments to make hockey accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

The key message for the hockey community is clear: HNZ demands the hockey community to pause and reflect on other alternatives before investing in new, high-specification performance turfs.



STRATEGIC APPROACH - WAY FORWARD

The following strategic recommendations are designed for the hockey community at large. They align to HNZ's focus on "open and grow the game" and creating a "Connected Hockey Network," while also addressing the significant challenges faced by the hockey community, including the burdens associated with facilities and the environmental, social, and financial pressures.

The recommendations have been organised into four distinct categories:

- **Adapt the Delivery Model**
- **Reimagine the Network of Facilities**
- **New Developments**
- **HNZ Specific Recommendations**

This structure ensures that each recommendation has practical advice tailored to its unique circumstances, whilst being underpinned by:

- **Sustainability**
- **Data-driven decisions**
- **Enhancing partnerships**
- **Optimising existing resources**
- **Flexible delivery options, making hockey accessible to more communities**

"It's time to look at developing the social infrastructure of hockey, not the asset infrastructure"

- Ken Maplesden

General Manager - Hockey Network



RECOMMENDATIONS

Adapt the Delivery Model

This recommendation refers to expanding the types of delivery and surfaces people train and play on and improving the utilisation of existing facilities in the broader network.

- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Leverage insights from associations, regional data, and other relevant investigations to identify opportunities for improvement and prioritise actions informed by evidence.
- **Flexible Programming & Alternative Formats:** Develop flexible programming that can adapt to different environments, such as urban spaces, schools, and recreational areas. Introduce alternative game formats and schedules to cater to different skill levels, time constraints, and interests.
- **Embrace New Ideas:** Encourage a culture of innovation within the hockey community, where new ideas and creative solutions are welcomed and explored.
- **Increase Accessibility:** Work on making hockey more accessible to diverse communities by removing barriers to participation, such as cost, location, and availability.
- **Utilise Current Assets:** Make the most of the facilities, equipment, and resources already available within the network to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, this includes using different surface types, different delivery models and alternative scheduling, moving away from performance-based turfs to accessible spaces like school multi-use spaces, tennis and netball courts.
- **Do not embark on new turf development:** Ensure all the points above have been explored, that the need has been identified, and there is initial support from the regional sports trust, local council, HNZ and hockey association before embarking on a new development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Reimagine the Network of Facilities

This recommendation refers to the utilisation of existing facilities from an optimisation and sustainability standpoint.

- **Facility Optimisation:** Optimise the use of existing facilities and those of the wider network by improving scheduling, maintenance, multi-use capabilities and developing partnerships.
- **Strengthen Current Partnerships & Develop New Relationships:** Engage with existing partners, such as local councils, schools, and sports organisations to deepen relationships and ensure mutual benefits.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Develop and adopt an Environmental Strategy including energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction measures, and sustainable facility management practices.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensure that full life cycle costs of turfs and venues are costed and planned for. Implement effective cost management structures and practices to optimise expenditure and ensure long-term financial health.
- **Resource Sharing:** Encourage the sharing of resources and best practices among different regions and clubs to develop sustainable practices, enhance overall performance and reduce costs.



RECOMMENDATIONS

New Developments

This recommendation refers to the need for a new facility to be built and the considerations that should take place.

- **Evaluate Need for New Turf Developments Carefully:** Before initiating new turf projects, conduct a thorough needs and feasibility assessment. Secure regional and local support, aligning new developments with community needs and strategic goals. Consider all alternatives before embarking on a new development.
- **Seek support:** Ensure relevant support is gained for new development and that organisations such as HNZ, local councils, regional sports trusts, and other community organisations/funders have provided feedback and support.
- **Strengthen Current Partnerships and Develop New Relationships:** Form new connections with councils, schools, and related organisations to support new developments that align with community needs and sustainable growth.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Create an Environmental Strategy for new developments including energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction measures, and sustainable facility management practices.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensure that full life cycle costs of turfs and venues are costed and planned for. Implement effective cost management structures and practices to optimise expenditure and ensure long-term financial health.
- **Increase Accessibility of New Facilities:** Design new facilities with an emphasis on accessibility by reducing barriers and improving reach, allowing diverse communities easier entry into hockey. Emphasis is placed on multi-use turf options, versus wet-based turf.



RECOMMENDATIONS

HNZ Specific Recommendations

This area focuses on where HNZ can lead and support the hockey community to achieve the recommendations above.

- **Good Global Citizen:** Actively contributing to the sustainability of our planet by following and supporting global trends that aim to reduce hockey's environmental footprint, i.e. dry turf innovations.
- **Responsive Governance:** Ensure that the governance of HNZ is responsive and able to make swift decisions to address emerging challenges.
- **Education and Awareness:** Educate the hockey community on the importance of environmental sustainability and encourage eco-friendly behaviours.
- **Embrace New Ideas:** Encourage a culture of innovation within the hockey community, where new ideas and creative solutions are welcomed and explored. HNZ leadership to explore potential changes in rules, affiliation structures, policies, and hosting criteria that could facilitate these initiatives more effectively. Additionally, prioritise alignment on the types of projects HNZ chooses to support.

CONCLUSION

The Spaces and Places Strategy identifies a significant imbalance in the provision of premium quality water-based turfs, which are designed for use by the elite, 1% of the hockey community. This overemphasis on catering to elite athletes has led to a neglect of the broader hockey community's needs, creating several challenges, including a culture of expectations alongside issues of sustainability from both environmental and financial perspectives.



The current focus on high-end facilities has resulted in substantial maintenance costs and environmental impacts, which are unsustainable in the long term. The majority of the hockey community, which includes grassroots and recreational players, has not been adequately served by the existing infrastructure. This has potentially limited hockey's growth and accessibility for new and diverse participants.

The way forward, as outlined in the Strategy, provides a clear direction for addressing these challenges. By utilising the existing resources within the community and adopting a variety of surfaces and game formats, HNZ aims to 'open up the game' to a broader audience. This approach will not only make hockey more inclusive and accessible but also ensure that it is more sustainable.

Central to this Strategy is the adoption of environmental and financial sustainability practices, which aim to reduce the carbon footprint and operational costs while enhancing the longevity and efficiency of facilities.