

Suggested points for presentation to Council hearings on NPW

1. Thanks for opportunity to speak, and introduction of Trevor Spittle, Andrew Stark
2. Because of our previous submissions made to Council in our post-earthquake circumstances, we will only summarise the main points of the vital role that a facility like QEII represents:
 - From an athletics perspective, not only did New Zealand lose a key international venue but also the only venue in Christchurch which could provide the proper facilities for local inter-club athletic competition needs at Children's, Senior and Masters levels
 - From a community perspective, Christchurch lost the type of sports facility that is recognised as being an essential recreational asset in any town of significant size.
 - With its foundational nature making athletics a core sport in all school curricula, QEII was used extensively for zone inter-school sports at primary and secondary level, and for a large number of individual secondary schools holding their annual athletic sports days
 - Being a smooth, all-weather surface, the QEII track was the only facility in Christchurch at which wheelchair athletes could train and compete
 - Apart from competitive athletics, the QEII track was used extensively for training and testing in other sports, and for fitness testing in services such as police and fire
3. Clearly, then, the loss of QEII has left a huge gap, and we gratefully acknowledge Council's recognition of this by specifically identifying the need for a replacement of the QEII athletic facilities, and the allocation of \$6.7M in its budget planning.
4. We also gratefully acknowledge the encouragement and assistance from Council for the establishment of a temporary athletics competition venue at Rawhiti Domain.
5. Rawhiti has now been our competitive home for 4 long summer seasons. Describing it as "adequate" would be putting aside the facts that:
 - Two events (pole vault and steeplechase) cannot be conducted there;
 - It is not "all-weather" so meetings have had to be cancelled from time to time;
 - A grass track is unresponsive and not an attractive proposition for sprinters and hurdlers;
 - It is limited to only 6 full lanes;
 - The in-field is not irrigated and is very uneven, leading to at least 2 throwers – including Tom Walsh – being denied New Zealand records due to excessive downwards slope in the landing area.
6. Rawhiti's shortcomings mean that we make frequent trips to Timaru to provide athletes with the competition conditions that are enjoyed by almost all other athletes in New Zealand. Typically each season we hold 5 or 6 of our meetings (including Canterbury Championships) in Timaru. Three of these meetings require

overnight accommodation and, adding this to travel costs, we estimate that athletes, supporters and officials spend around \$100,000 collectively per season on our frequent Timaru trips.

7. Meanwhile, a group of us has been working closely with Council staff on investigating and planning a new permanent home for track and field athletics in Christchurch. Our own analysis of our sport showed that, even pre-earthquake, the majority of club and school athletic activity was quite clearly in the western sector of the city. In terms of travel times and distances, locating a venue somewhere in the western sector would have made considerable sense pre-earthquake, and the broadly westwards drift of the city's population post-earthquake makes that an even more sensible choice.
8. Given this demographic, setting up Rawhiti as a temporary home may seem nonsensical but we were very limited for choice because of geotechnical issues, and park usage by other sports. A compelling justification for going with Rawhiti was that, assuming a western-sector location would be decided on with time, the battered eastern sector would at least be left with a very useful athletic legacy for use by clubs and schools on that side of the city.
9. We have a development strategy that is largely independent of the chosen location for a new competition facility. That strategy is based on a number of widely distributed, club-based, training-only facilities, each providing limited areas of synthetic runways for jumps, plus concrete throwing circles. Post-earthquake, in the absence of a "central" home base, clubs have been compelled to do what they can within their means to provide better facilities for their athletes to use in training. Thus we now have the situation of good club bases at 6 suburban locations which collectively represent a dispersed number of locally accessible, good quality training facilities. The elephant obviously missing from the room is a full-specification competition venue, centred on a 400m all-weather track of at least 8 lanes.
10. While we admit that our initial preference for a western-sector location for the "missing elephant" was at Burnside Park, we have been persuaded by the convincing arguments put forward to us primarily by Simon Battrick and Alistair McGuffie, that the needs of the athletic community would be served best by a multi-sports hub, with the presently-proposed Nga Puna Wai being the clear pick of the sites under consideration.
11. Having thrown our support behind this concept, we have been fully involved in an on-going series of meetings with the other intended major stakeholders (hockey and tennis) together with Simon and Alistair. We have to say that it has been a pleasure working within this team, and Simon has led the whole process with great energy, and understanding of differing resources, wants and needs.

12. Our written submission bullet-points what we see as the compelling reasons why Nga Puna Wai is the logical location for the sporting hub proposal, and why we are therefore fully supportive of any changes to the reserve's Management Plan to achieve that outcome.

13. What can we bring to the table to help facilitate such a sporting hub?

- A huge pool of knowledge and experience on what does and does not work in terms of the layout and operation of an athletics venue for both training and competition
- While our financial resources are limited, we are fully aware that “on the ground” aspects of an athletic facility do not alone make it usable for athletic competition. We will continue to provide and maintain the numerous and expensive “above ground” items of equipment which must conform to rigid IAAF requirements (photo-timing gear, pole vault and high jump landing pads, safety cages for discus and hammer, hurdles, throwing implements, etc.) We will also continue to hire our equipment to other users, such as schools, at a very nominal rental.
- Again, as we did at QEII, we will always work cooperatively with other sporting codes based at the hub and, in particular, potential users of the track and its infield, to minimise usage clashes, also acknowledging that there may be financial benefits to Council if we agree to temporarily vacate the track and hold our meeting elsewhere.
- In this regard we plan to honour our pre-earthquake promise to our South Canterbury counterparts, and schedule at least two meetings in Timaru each summer. If considered advantageous, we would be prepared to look at holding one of those out-of-town meetings at Show Weekend so that we would have no parking or stadium usage requirements during that week.
- Presently all of our administrators and highly-qualified officials are volunteers, and they would continue to make their services available at no cost for any major athletic meetings which can represent considerable income to the Christchurch economy. (e.g. The 2011 IPC event represented an estimated \$15M of GDP.)
- We accept that if Nga Puna Wai gets the go-ahead it will not be completed in a single major construction. We have been promised repeatedly that an athletic track would be part of whatever comprises Stage 1 of the project. However, we also understand that the initial emphasis must be on athletic facilities sufficient for staging our regular inter-club meetings, but without all the bells and whistles that may transpire when the whole project is finally completed. In other words, we are not expecting a QEII-size grandstand as part of Stage 1 - nor indeed ever!

14. *Speaking of QEII, we are reminded that almost 45 years ago, the predecessors of this Council made a bold and, at that time, very controversial decision for the principal athletic and swimming facilities for the Commonwealth Games to be located at what was then considered by many to be too far away from the centre of the city. Time and the subsequent appeal and success of QEII clearly vindicated that decision. While Nga Puna Wai is not nearly as controversial in terms of its location relative to the city*

centre and future growth, it may be controversial to some people in other ways. We urge the Council to show similar forward thinking in reaching its decision on the present proposal.

15. We recognise that, assuming Council does give its go-ahead for the establishment of a sporting hub at Nga Puna Wai, even Stage 1 of the development is not going to happen overnight. Given our circumstances we do ask that, once the decision is made, the planning, tendering and construction that follow are completed as quickly as is practically possible.

An analogy with running a multi-lap race might be an appropriate way to finish: We know that there is still some distance to go but our energy reserves are steadily diminishing. We don't want to be in the position of coming up the home straight expecting the bell to signal the start of the last lap, only to find that the officials have miscounted the laps and that there is still another exhausting lap to run before we receive the encouragement of the bell, and the commencement of the final lap to the finish line.

Many thanks for your time. Andrew will now add some comments from the Masters perspective before we invite questions.