

Section 6

Swimming Pools

9. Swimming Pools

9.1 Purpose

This document sets out the proposed management and investment approach for Central Hawke's Bay's two community swimming pools located at Waipukurau and Waipawa.

While we have an amazing outdoor environment for water-based activity, we need a good plan in place for the future of our swimming pools. The community is growing, and it is important that we plan and think ahead for this growth.

This document includes a range of actions to support improving accessibility to swimming pools and other initiatives such as water safety and learn to swim. Wider considerations of access to rivers, lakes and the ocean is included in Council's Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy.

9.2 Background

Central Hawke's Bay has two swimming pools that are an outcome of significant community fundraising efforts. Swimming pools are a significant investment both in terms of development and ongoing operations, so it is important that we make the most of our existing facilities.

Waipawa and Districts Centennial Memorial Pool

The Waipawa and Districts Centennial Memorial Pool is located on Madge Hunter Park, Waipawa. It was built in 1965 and the pool was replaced in 2019. Council owns the pool and administers the land it is located on. The pool is managed and operated through a contract with Aqua Management Ltd. Up to 12,000 people access this pool over the five-month period that it is open.

The pool is outdoors and open from November through to March each year. The Waipawa Pool upgrade is being progressed with the support of community fund raising, and is providing accessible reception and family change rooms, additional storage, and family-friendly facilities.

Centralines Pool

The Centralines Pool is part of the Centralines Sports Complex located on Russell Park, Waipukurau. It was built in 1997 and previously known as the AW Parsons Pool. The Central Hawke's Bay Community Trust owns the pool and contracts Aqua Management Ltd to manage and operate the facility. Up to 75,000 people access this pool every year. Council provides an annual operational grant to the Trust to recognise the important role of this facility as the only indoor pool in the district, and the range of programmes and services it provides to the community year-round. Major investment in the Centralines Pool in Waipukurau will be required in the near future.

School Pools

There are several school pools located throughout the district. Known primary school pools are located at St Joseph's, Pōrangahau, Waipawa, Tikokino, Otāne, Flemington, Takapau, Pukehou, Argyll East, Elsthorpe, Sherwood and Ongaonga. However, there is limited understanding of the use and condition of these facilities.

9.3 Why swimming pools are important to our community

Our water-based location with outstanding beaches, rivers, and lakes, amplifies the importance of water safety education for our community. Too many people lose their lives due to preventable drowning each year in the Hawke's Bay region.

Swimming pools provide opportunities for people to feel safe and confident in the water, keep fit, play, and have fun, or become competitive in swimming. Swimming is a healthy, low impact activity that can be continued throughout a lifetime.

There are many benefits of having swimming pools in our community including:

- Spaces for families and friends to play and interact in a fun and safe environment
- Places and services for our community to learn safety and confidence in and around water, a fundamental skill for tamariki and rangatahi
- Recreational swimming promotes health and relaxation. Swimming is identified as one of the most 'heart healthy' exercises and can also help with mental health, improving mood, and easing joint ailments
- Training spaces for swim clubs, multi-sport and other water-based activities
- Water-based exercise has multiple advantages over land-based exercise; it is low impact, creates more resistance training, and water disperses heat more efficiently

It is recognised that the CHB Swim for Life Committee makes a considerable contribution to reducing barriers to participation and in learn to swim programmes.

The key theme from community feedback we received through the Thriving Places and Spaces Survey in 2021/2022 was the importance of learn to swim and creating opportunities for more people to access existing facilities to increase confidence in the water. Feedback supports making the most of what we have through the upgrade of existing facilities.

9.4 Key challenges and opportunities

Investment and ongoing costs

The cost of operating and maintaining swimming pools is high compared to other community facilities like indoor courts and community halls. Most aquatic facilities operate at a loss and a subsidy is provided, usually by councils. Users do not pay the true cost of providing the service.

The Centralines Pool complex requires increased investment to ensure the facility continues to provide a safe environment and meets the needs of the community. A better understanding is needed of the condition of assets, funding and required programme of improvements, including short, medium, and long-term priorities. Major costs include replacement of the ceiling tiles, seismic strengthening work in the main pool and the wider renewal of the facility as access to community funding for maintenance and renewals becomes more difficult.

Long term security of access and investment

The current provision operates under two different ownership models which have worked reasonably well to date. However, as the facilities age and levels of maintenance and health and safety requirements increase, clarity on future levels of service, asset, and funding responsibilities is needed.

A long-term sustainable solution is required to position Centralines Pool as the district's premier indoor pool facility. This needs to consider the most optimal model for ownership, asset management, development, operations and funding, that delivers on the key objectives outlined below.

Rural pools and access

Schools traditionally play a critical role in the provision of swimming pools, particularly in large rural areas with a greater distribution of small towns, and the main community swimming pools are typically located in urban areas. Challenges for rural communities include:

- An unclear funding mechanism from the Ministry of Education, which provides for some maintenance but not school pool replacement or upgrades
- The relative distance that people must travel from rural areas to access the two main pools in Waipukurau and Waipawa

We received mixed feedback through the community survey about whether Council should have a role in supporting rural school pools. Those in support stressed that learn to swim is an essential life skill for all and a priority for tamariki. Rural pools can provide safe, controlled facilities to build water confidence and have fun in the water. Those who didn't support Council having a role were of the view that this is a central government responsibility through the Ministry of Education.

Water safety

Water safety is very important to the community given the many rivers we have and our proximity to beaches. Hawke's Bay had an increase from two preventable drowning fatalities in 2019 to seven in 2020, and back to two in 2021. Nationally, rivers and beaches are the most common areas where preventable fatal drownings occur. On a per capita basis, the preventable fatal drowning rate is represented as 1.62 per 100,000 people in New Zealand. This rate has been steady for the past five years. Māori and men were both over-represented in the national statistics provided by Water Safety New Zealand.

Swimming pools play a key role in providing opportunities for all ages to build confidence in the water and learn to swim, so it is important that they are accessible by all our community, especially those in high-risk groups. The Active NZ survey by Sport New Zealand identifies swimming has had one of the largest declines in participation across all surveyed activities, with tamariki and rangatahi participation showing a 22% decline and adult participation declining by 26% over the last three years.

More recent data indicates that the drop in swimming participation was maintained in 2021, and that swimming participation has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

9.5 What we want to achieve

Key objectives for swimming pools are:

- Meet the needs of a diverse range of users and encourage lifelong participation to support a physically active, happy and healthy community
- Provide fun for all our community
- Provide a safe and controlled environment to improve water safety and confidence, given our proximity to natural water areas including rivers and beaches
- Promote water safety education through the development of confidence and skills gained from both recreational play and learn to swim programmes
- Provide swimming pools in the most cost-effective way, considering the whole-of-life costs of facilities, so it is financially sustainable for the community and operators
- Reduce barriers to access for people with physical and intellectual abilities, people on low incomes, people who have limited transport options, and those in high risk groups identified in water safety statistics

9.6 Action Plan

This outlines the steps that Council will take to achieve the key objectives and levels of service, and includes a mix of short and longer term actions.

Topic	Action	Timeframe
Waipawa and Districts Centennial Memorial Pool	<p>Complete Phase 2 upgrade. Accessible reception and family changing rooms and additional storage. A family-friendly dry play area is planned with BBQ, seating, and shade on the grass area. Solar heating and covers will extend the season and improve use on cooler summer days.</p> <p>Strengthen the identity of the pool and connection to the town centre, schools, other community and recreational facilities and rural communities as part of town centre planning.</p>	Phase 2 delivery funding in current LTP (2024).
Centralines Pool	<p>A long-term sustainable solution is required to position Centralines Pool as the district's only indoor pool facility.</p> <p>This needs to consider the optimal model for ownership, asset management, development, operations and funding, which delivers on the key objectives outlined below:</p> <p>Council will work together with CHB Community Trust to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address short term renewal issues • Complete technical review of the facility • Agree key facility values and optimal model to support this • Determine short-, medium- and long-term investment and funding options • Plan to meet unmet learn to swim demand • Meet its legislative and best-practice responsibilities, including Section 17a of the Local Government Act 2002 and Pool Safe • Identify "quick win" opportunities and identify how Council and the Trust can support each other to achieve these through to the 2024 – 2034 Long Term Plan 	<p>High priority action – commence 2022</p> <p>Issues and options for future of the facility developed and consulted on through 2024-2034 LTP.</p>
Rural school pools	<p>Consider options to provide support for rural school pools' upgrade, maintenance, and operations to assist with accessibility and distribution of swimming pools across the district. Gather information to assess the ongoing viability of these pools.</p> <p>Note there was mixed feedback from the community survey on whether Council should have a role in supporting rural school pools.</p>	<p>Gather rural school pool information - asset condition, operation, and use (2022).</p> <p>Option analysis and decision on supporting the upgrade, maintenance, and operation of rural school pools (2024-34 LTP).</p>
Affordability and accessibility	<p>Consider ways to maximise participation for the community that do not currently use these facilities or the programmes they offer, particularly learn to swim programmes. Focus on affordability and accessibility.</p>	Ongoing
Management and operations	<p>Ensure swimming pools continue to be actively managed to encourage high levels of use and enjoyment for the community. Ensure sound management, including asset management, that optimises operational and maintenance costs and meets best practice health and safety requirements.</p>	Ongoing
Learn to swim	<p>Work with Sport Hawke's Bay and Water Safety New Zealand to identify opportunities to improve access to training for learn to swim instructors, with a view to increasing the number of learn to swim qualified instructors available.</p> <p>It is recognised that the CHB Swim for Life Committee make a considerable contribution to reducing barriers to participation and in learn to swim programmes.</p>	Ongoing
Water safety messaging	<p>Continue to work together with Councils across the region to achieve a common understanding on water safety messaging and practices that support families who visit pool facilities throughout the region, e.g. identification of children under eight, and a zero tolerance breaches of pool alone policies. Note there is currently a swimming pool operator's group that discusses water safety messaging and common practices, especially around pool safety.</p>	Ongoing

9.8 Attachment 1: Community Swimming Pools

Swimming Pools	Role of Council	Facilities	Availability and use
<p>Waipawa and Districts Centennial Memorial Pools (1965)</p> <p>Pools were replaced in 2019</p>	<p>Council owned and operated (via contract with Aqua Management)</p> <p>Council owned land (Madge Hunter Park)</p>	<p>Outdoor pool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 metre pool • Learner's pool • Grassed area <p>Not heated. Note pool covers were approved in 2021/22 to ensure safe temperatures.</p>	<p>Open November through to March.</p> <p>Approx. 12,000 users each season.</p> <p>Good use from local schools.</p> <p>Disabled access ramp.</p>
<p>Centralines Sports Complex - Pool, Waipukurau (1998)</p> <p>Formerly AW Parsons Indoor Pool</p>	<p>CHB Community Trust owned and operated (via contract with Aqua Management).</p> <p>Council provides an annual operational grant to recognise services provided to the community.</p> <p>Crown owned land administered by Council (Russell Park).</p>	<p>Indoor heated pool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 metre pool • Learner's pool • Beach/waterfall • Outdoor space • Meeting room • Therapy room 	<p>Open year round.</p> <p>Approx. 75,000 users per year.</p> <p>Programmes include learn to swim, masters, aqua jogging, school holiday, squad training, little flippers.</p> <p>CHB Swim Club base.</p> <p>Disabled access (ramp and chair lift).</p>

9.9 Attachment 2: Swimming Pool trends

Swimming pools or aquatic centres today are designed as community hubs, bringing together complementary wellness activities with more traditional recreation, pool and fitness offerings under one roof. Facilities that offer places to eat, relax, play or be with others as well as places to swim and exercise are those with the most appeal across age, gender, culture, ability, and interests. Co-location with other community facilities and services also adds to the destination experience.

Research throughout New Zealand and overseas indicates that the recreation and leisure market will continue to be the largest user of swimming pools (60-70%) as it includes people of all ages, ability, types, interests, and genders and therefore has the greatest reach in our communities. Some pools are even providing specific 'manu' or 'bombing' areas within their facility.

The competitive/training/fitness market is a more specialist market including younger, fitter and more active people who make time to train and compete, usually in a structured way. Older (50+) age groups are a major growth area, and they have different expectations for aquatic facilities, including temperature, access, covered and water depth. They often require warmer water and activities or programmes associated with health and relaxation.

'Learn to swim' is an area which continues to grow, especially as schools move away from providing these opportunities. Public pools play an important part in building water confidence through these structured programmes as well as through informal recreational swimming.