



# The Future of Swimming Pools

Our community loves to be in the water whether it's swimming at the beach, in our rivers, at our community pools or the paddling pool at home. This conversation is about our two community swimming pools located at Waipukurau and Waipawa, the important role of school pools and how we interact with our natural swimming pools – being the rivers, sea and lakes of the district. While we have an amazing outdoor environment for water-based activity, we also need to have a good plan in place for the future of our swimming pools.

## Why are swimming pools important?

While we are surrounded by outstanding beaches, rivers and lakes, with this comes the need for water safety. Too many people lose their lives due to preventable drowning each year in Hawke's Bay.

Swimming pools provide opportunities for people to feel safe and confident in the water, keep fit and have fun, or become competitive in swimming. Swimming is a healthy, low impact activity that can be continued for a lifetime from 0 to 100 years plus.

Central Hawke's Bay has an extensive coastline and network of rivers that connect the Mountains to the Sea. With our hot summers, water-based recreation is a popular activity for our community-whether it's swimming at the beach, in our rivers, at our public swimming pools, school pools or pools at home.

Public swimming pools at Waipukurau and Waipawa provide flat water space for lane swimming, fitness, recreation, learning to swim, events and training. Recreation swimming is usually made up of families, people coming with friends and groups for play, fun, relaxation, social activity and low-level competition or participation. Across all of these activities is the importance of growing people's confidence in the water and awareness of water safety.

## Why are we having this conversation?

We've made some big investment in the Waipawa Pool recently, but we also know we have major investment in the Centralines Pool in Waipukurau in the near future. Our community is also growing and we need to make sure that we plan and think ahead for this growth.

We are also thinking about what support our community needs to access water to swim and promote water safety, whether it's the local river, the school pool or beach.

We want to understand what the community's future role and investment in pools might need to look like for the long term – but also what challenges and support we need to advocate for locally, to see the continued use of school pools and to support other initiatives such as water safety and learn to swim.

We have created this discussion document to start the conversation about the future of pools in our district. This conversation will take many forms over the next few months, and we hope that together we can all create a shared vision for the future of our swimming pools that will guide our community's future investment in these facilities.

## How swimming pools contribute to our Project Thrive outcomes

Connected Citizens	Swimming pools provide places where people can connect with others and enjoy a range of water-based activities.
Strong Communities	Swimming pools provide places where our community can play, compete and be physically active and healthy.
Durable Infrastructure	Swimming pools are fit for purpose, meeting the needs of our community today and in the future.

## Our Swimming Pools now

Council's current level of service is to 'provide access to good quality swimming pool facilities for fun, recreation and exercise'. This is achieved through provision of two public swimming pools located in Waipukurau and Waipawa.

Swimming Pools	Role of Council	Facilities	Availability and use
<p>Waipawa and Districts Centennial Memorial Pool (1965)</p> <p>Pools were replaced in 2019</p> <p>Located on Madge Hunter Park, Harker Street</p>	<p>Council administered land Recreation Reserve (HMQ, NZGZ 1962 p195)</p> <p>Operated via contract with Aqua Management</p>	<p>Outdoor pool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 metre pool</li> <li>• Learner's pool</li> <li>• Grassed area</li> </ul> <p>Not heated. Note pool covers approved in 2021/22 to ensure safe temperatures are provided.</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 known as AW Parsons Indoor Pool</p> <p>Located on Russell Park</p>	<p>Central Hawke's Bay District 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>Council owned land Public Recreation ground NZGZ 1983 p2399</p>	<p>Indoor heated pool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 metre pool</li> <li>• Learner's pool</li> <li>• Beach/waterfall</li> <li>• Outdoor space</li> <li>• Meeting room</li> <li>• Therapy room</li> </ul>	<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>

There are also a number of school pools located throughout the district, some of which are still used while others are not.

Council also provides parks and reserves that enable access to outdoor swimming opportunities including rivers and beaches. This places increased importance on the need for our community to feel safe and confident in the water.

## Some trends around the future of swimming pools include:

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 gender 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, being: temperature, access, covered and water depth. They often require water of warm temperature 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.

## We think that the key principles guiding the future of our swimming pools could be to:

- Meet the needs of a diverse range of users and encourage lifelong participation to support a physically active, happy and healthy community.
- Provide fun, safe, inviting and accessible<sup>1</sup> places for all our community.
- Promote water safety education through the development of confidence and skills gained from both recreational play and learn to swim programmes.
- Recognise the role that swimming pools play in providing a safe and controlled environment to improve water safety and confidence and the importance of this for our district given our proximity to natural water areas including rivers and beaches.
- Provide swimming pools that service our district needs first and foremost, recognising our proximity to larger regional aquatic facilities in Napier and Hastings.

## The opportunities we have identified so far include:

- Swimming pools or aquatic centres today are being 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.
- We have 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. Opportunities include extended opening hours, more play features (eg. 'manu' spaces and splash pads), increased school use, whanau days and integration with surrounding facilities.
- Our pools are clearly valued by our community as they are well utilised and consistently exceed their user targets. Customer satisfaction levels are high as well. We need to make sure they continue to meet the needs of our community today and in the future.
- Provision of affordable and accessible learn to swim/swimming lessons particularly for low decile families and schools.
- Recognise and promote water safety messaging and the role of swimming pools in helping our community to be confident around water.
- Using this process to better understand the value that our rural and urban communities place on having access to public swimming pool facilities in our district and expectations of the type of experience these facilities provide in the future.
- Using this process to determine community expectations for the future provision of swimming pools in the district and 'test' whether the current provision is adequate based on:

- Provision of two public swimming pools for the district based in our two larger urban areas. One owned by Council and the other by the Central Hawke's Bay District Community Trust, with Council assisting with operational funding through a service agreement.
- Swimming pools are district-wide facilities. This means that rather than having swimming pools distributed throughout the district, we have two facilities located in our largest urban areas. These facilities service our whole community and become destinations that people in our rural areas travel to access.
- A higher level of service at the Centralines Pool through it being an indoor pool with year-round access, the facilities provided and range of programmes.
- A lower level of service at the Waipawa Pool through the facilities provided, seasonal access and limited range of programmes available. Primarily focused on fun and leisure!
- Recognition that there is a wider network of outdoor water-based experiences that includes our beaches, rivers, school swimming pools and private swimming pools.
- Recognition that our community can access regional swimming facilities that provide a higher level of service (larger pools, more leisure facilities) in Napier and Hastings.
- Strengthen the connection of both pools to the town centre, schools, other community and recreational facilities and rural communities.
- Phase 2 of the Waipawa Pool upgrade is planned for 2026 to create accessible reception and family change 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. \$650,000 is included in the Long-Term Plan for Phase 2.

## The challenges we have identified so far include:

- The relative distance that people have to travel from rural areas to access the two main pools that are located only five minutes apart. How do we enable greater accessibility for those located in rural areas, further inland or along our coastal areas, particularly schools?
- What support is provided to rural school pools to enable them to keep operating? These pools are used by the local community and receive limited (if any) Ministry of Education funding towards their upkeep.
- Water safety is hugely important to the district given the many rivers we have and our proximity to beaches. Pools can play a key role in providing opportunities for all ages to learn to swim, including adults. How do we make learn to swim opportunities available to all our community?
- The Centralines Pool complex requires increased investment to ensure the facility continues to provide a safe environment and meets the needs of the community. 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. As the district continues to experience unprecedented growth, the Central Hawke's Bay District Community Trust looks to Council for guidance and direction on the implications of this growth and what a future service agreement and service provision could look like for the district in the long term.
- A better understanding is needed of the condition of assets, funding and required programme of improvements, including short, medium and long-term priorities.
- The current provision operates under two different ownership models which has worked reasonably well to date; however, as the facilities age and have increasing levels of maintenance required and increasing health and safety requirements, clarity on future asset and funding responsibilities is needed. This will need to be considered in the long-term sustainability of the Trust model of ownership and operation.
- Understanding the implications of growth on our current facilities in terms of capacity to accommodate increased use and expectations for the type of experience these facilities provide (eg, pool types, leisure, health requirements, programmes, activities etc). Known implications to date include an increased demand for Learn-to-Swim 'learn to swim' programmes that the Centralines Pool is limited in its ability to meet demand due to pool tank capacity issues.
- 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 mostly by councils. Users do not pay the true cost of providing the service.
- Waipawa Pool is only available within the summer season for up to 5 months of the year. When school is in term, the pool is open weekdays are open from 3pm. During school holidays and weekends throughout the

summer the hours are 11am-6:30pm. Also, improvements to the changing sheds, maintenance of general infrastructure and consistent pool temperatures are required.

- The school pool network traditionally has played a critical role in the provision of swimming pools particularly in large rural areas which have a greater distribution of small towns. The challenge with school pools is the unclear funding mechanism from the Ministry of Education, which provides for some maintenance but not replacement or upgrades.

### **Let us know your ideas?**

We're still in the early phases of this work, however we are keen to hear your ideas to enable water safety and access to water for swimming in Tamatea - Central Hawke's Bay. You can do this by completing our online survey at [www.chbdc.govt.nz/thriving-places-and-spaces](http://www.chbdc.govt.nz/thriving-places-and-spaces) or emailing us on [thrivingplacesandspaces@chbdc.govt.nz](mailto:thrivingplacesandspaces@chbdc.govt.nz)