

Sportsville Dargaville – A Case Study

If we work together, everyone wins ...

The girl at the BP station in Dargaville knew where the Sportsville facility was – *“straight ahead, left over the bridge and then first right,”* she said – and she also knew what it was, a new multi-sport complex at Memorial Park. Her awareness of the new facility suggests local people are proud of what has been accomplished.

This case study is a story about the benefits for user groups of co-location and collaboration. It explains how six codes co-ordinated their facility wishes and, via the reconstituted Kauri Coast Recreational Society (KCRS) Board, have taken ownership of playing fields for rugby, league and football, courts for tennis and netball, complete with new floodlights, a petanque terrain, changing rooms and an administration block.

As one happy administrator said, *“We used to get changed on the field before the game. Now we have real changing rooms and hot water!! And there’s a white board to help our players understand the game plan. We don’t know ourselves!”*

Another was rapt about the improvements: *“With new floodlighting, we can spread games over the week. And the new sealed surfaces are so good, given what we’ve been used to in the past.”*

But it’s not just the user groups who are happy in their new home.

At a cost of \$2.901M, the Sportsville project has been an enlightening exercise in self-help. All the participants – sports codes, local and regional councils, funders, the KCRS Board and Sport Northland – have learnt important and positive lessons from their involvement in the development. And those observers, who were sceptical about the ability of volunteer sports groups to raise big money and then share the new facility with other codes, have seen their doubts vanish in the face of the success of the project.

So, who learnt what?

What were the learnings for the user groups?

- That we don’t have to operate (as we have in the past) in isolation and on a small scale.
- That we get real benefits from our close association with other codes – and that this close association could well be extended to other areas of collaboration going forward.
- That when we entered into initial discussions, we had to do so with an open mind as to what was on offer and what our group might receive from the collaboration.
- That we realised some compromise by our group would almost always be necessary.
- That true collaboration is hard – it needs all parties to be committed to it and to work at it constantly. Remember, it took us six years to complete the project.

- That communication is key. If we feel there is not enough information, it's up to us to say something.
- That we get better facilities (in quality and scale) if we work together.
- That expert advice from an independent consultant is crucial to good decision-making. David Allan (Global Leisure Group) was a neutral party and gave us proper and realistic feasibility and facility plans.
- That the KCRS Board is our Board, all local people, but it's independent and isn't captured by any of the user groups.
- That Sport Northland was so valuable as an independent guide and mentor to the project: *"we couldn't have done it without Sport Northland's professional help which lifted the ability of the volunteers."*
- That there has been a huge boost in morale when we see what we have achieved, and it's already being reflected in improved playing numbers.
- That we now need a clear idea of our next steps, a plan for second & third phases of the development.
- That you can still be surprised by local people: when construction began, two individuals pledged to personally cover the cost of any financial shortfall until promised funds became available. Given that building costs were running at an annual increase of 17%, effectively a 37% increase from QS to first tender, this "underwrite" was very much needed and extraordinarily generous.



The six sports courts looking back to the facility at the other end

Timeline of project

- Pre 2010: Rumblings from some sports about the need to be co-located but no agreement on where
- April 2011: Sport Northland asked their opinion – submits to KDC Annual Plan suggesting not enough evidence and that Council set aside \$\$ for consultant
- Dec 2011: No Council \$\$ forthcoming, so Sport Northland accesses \$20,000 from ASB Community Trust for development of a proposed Dargaville facilities plan
- March 2012: Global Leisure Group (GLG) engaged and begin work on facilities plan - Dave Allan from GLG consults stakeholders through surveys, face-to-face consultation, release of draft plan for feedback and final presentation of plan
- Oct 2012: Final Dargaville Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Plan released. Major recommendations:
 - Development of a recreation hub at Selwyn Park
 - Development of a multi-sport hub at Memorial/Rugby Parks
- Nov 2012: So as not to lose momentum, the Sport Northland Board agrees to establish a local Board to drive the recommendations. Model recommended in plan by GLG implemented:
 - 2 Board members elected by stakeholder groups
 - 5 Board members appointed by an Appointments Panel
- Dec 2012: 2 members elected by 11 stakeholder groups and Sport Northland Board appoints an Appointments Panel
- March 2013: 5 Board members appointed by the Appointments Panel after advertising and application/interview process
- Feb 2013: Sport Northland Board agrees to provide initial interim administration support and advice for the local Board
- March 2013: Board meets for first time
- April/May 2013: Consultation meetings with 11 stakeholder groups held
- June 2013: First stakeholder workshop attended by 22 people representing 10 stakeholder groups – agreement to proceed
- November 2013: \$20,000 secured by Sport Northland from NZ Lotteries Board for completion of a Feasibility Study for the project
- February 2014: Feasibility Study underway including three lots of consultation with stakeholders and community
- August 2014: Feasibility Study completed
- August 2013 - August 2014: Ongoing communication by local Board with stakeholders, including meetings and updates
- September 2014: AGM held – adopts the constitution of an existing organization which was originally established to develop the Dargaville Skate Park; name change to Kauri Coast Recreational Society INC through amendment to constitution
- October 2014: \$18,000 secured from Pub Charity for geotechnical/survey report and concept design/QS costing - Project Manager engaged
- November 2014 - February 2015: Local funding confirmed and major funding applications (ASBCT and NZ Lotteries) completed

- Jan 2015: Licence to Occupy (land lease) agreement with KDC and agreements with stakeholders for contributions to CAPEX and OPEX underway
- Dec 2015: Foundation North grants \$1,033,000 towards the project
- March 2016: Griffiths and Associates appointed as Project Manager
- June 2016: NZ Lotteries grant \$650,000 towards the project
- August 2016: Pub Charity donates \$178,000 towards the project
- November 2017: Logan Campbell Trust donates \$10,000 towards the project
Site Blessing and Turning-of-the-Sod ceremony
ARCO underway with building construction
- February 2018: Robinson Asphalts underway with sports court construction
- July 2018: Robinson Asphalts complete sports court construction
- September 2018: ARCO complete building construction and facility formally opened by Grant Robertson, Minister for Sport and Recreation
- October 2018: Facility operational
- November 2018: NRC grants \$600,000 to complete facility
- December 2018: Floodlighting installed

What were the learnings for the Kaipara District Council?

- That there are economies of scale when proven community needs can be bundled up into a single project.
- That a well-planned project driven by a quality community group can attract substantial third-party investment at no cost to KDC.
- That Sport Northland's reputation as a successful leadership organisation, and its role as champion for the project, provided KDC (and, in turn, the funding agencies) with a high level of confidence.
- That there was great value for KDC in having access to professional guidance from Global Leisure Group about needs and priorities.
- That having a plan is essential: the *Dargaville Sports Infrastructure Plan* was key to reaching agreement among stakeholders.
- That having adopted a plan, we trust what the plan says, rather than revisiting other options and delaying progress.
- That council knew it was dealing with volunteers who were actually assisting council, doing a job which many would argue is a council responsibility, and so it was important to be helpful at every opportunity.
- That ownership and management of the asset can successfully be vested in a local KCRS Board of proven community leaders.
- That the facility has already become a popular site for a wider range of activities (e.g. DOC seminars, Council forums, a school cross-country and weddings.)



Brent Eastwood (Sport Northland Chief Executive), Chris Biddles (Sportsville Dargaville Chair) and the Hon. Grant Robertson (Minister of Sport and Recreation) at the facility opening day on 29 September 2018

What were the learnings for the funders?

- That the availability of what is normally considered sufficient seed funding is not always reflective of whether the project has merit or not. This project had only modest financial support in the early stages but still got across the line.
- That proven need, well-developed plans, and capable project management make it easier for funders to make larger grants: following a one-off smaller grant for the original feasibility study, Foundation North provided \$1.033M grant.
- That the principle of community ownership is attractive for funders: in this case, a capable and credible KCRS Board was in place to own and drive the project.
- That there is a level of comfort in contributing a share of the overall cost with other funders.
- That the fact that the new facility offers more flexible use, and that the benefits aren't confined to sport and recreation groups or a single age group, appeals to funders.
- That the Northland Regional Council's targeted rate policy was critically important in providing the last piece of the funding jigsaw.

- That the positive attitude of community groups can make a difference: the willingness of the KCRS Board to “roll their sleeves up and get stuck in” helped persuade funders to commit to the project.

Project Funders

Foundation North	\$1,033,000
NZ Lotteries Board	\$ 650,000
Northland Regional Council	\$ 600,000
Project User Groups	\$ 196,000 1
Pub Charity	\$ 178,000
Kaipara District Council	\$ 170,000
Local Contractors In-kind	\$ 30,000 2
Memorial Park Trust	\$ 20,000
Local Fundraising	\$ 14,000
Sir John Logan Campbell Trust	\$ 10,000
Total	\$2,901,000
1 Dargaville Tennis, NW Netball, NW Football, NW Bulls Rugby League, NW Rugby, NW Junior Rugby, Dargaville Rugby and Sports Club, Dargaville 60's Up,	
2 Douglas Logging and Williamson Contracting	

What were the learnings for the new Board?

- That a robust governance model (two elected representatives from the stakeholder groups plus five independents appointed for skills and experience) was critical in realising the dream.
- That there is high value in recruiting trustees with background in strategic decision-making.
- That continuity of KCRS board members was equally important: six of the seven trustees have stayed the distance and are still there today.
- That trustees absolutely have to be local people or have a local connection. This was a self-help exercise and shouldn't be delegated to people outside the district.
- That patience is a key attribute because a major project like this doesn't always go smoothly. As Chairman Chris Biddles noted, “we had to learn how to crawl before we could walk, let alone run, and sometimes it felt like three steps forward and two back. Keeping our eye on the end game was crucial.”
- That sharing the burden of work between members of the KCRS board was essential because “we were all volunteers too.”
- That if the right people are involved you can get access to organisations such as Sport NZ. They were very helpful in supporting the project and providing various documents from other Sportsvilles in NZ. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but you need access to that wheel.
- That transparency, especially regular communication directly with stakeholders, was absolutely vital: “This is something we could have done better, stakeholders asked to only be called to meetings when something was needed. We took them at their word but some then felt they were being left out of the loop. In hindsight, we should have

put out a regular email update, perhaps 6 or 8 per year and once construction started, monthly. This is a very important learning for future projects.”

- That it was important to enlist the support of local media (Big River FM and Kaipara Lifestyler) in profiling the new facility.
- That as a reconstituted KCRS Board we learnt a great deal from the professional example of Sport Northland advisors.

Board Member Profiles

Chris Biddles (Independent Chair - Appointed)

Angus Pure Stud breeder/farmer from Pouto

Extensive governance experience and leadership as follows:

Sport Northland (1993-2019) Elected to the Sport Northland BOT in 2000, Deputy Chair in 2003 and Chair 2014-18

2001-08 was the SN rep and Chair of the Whangarei Aquatic Centre Redevelopment Committee.

Southern Rugby and Squash Club 31 years' service holding most positions in the club

Te Kopuru School BOT (1992-1998) Chair BOT 4 years

Kaipara District Council Chair Sports Community Funding Allocation Committee

Angus NZ board member 2002-12

PBBNZ 2006-08 board member 2008-13 Chair

Angus Pure NZ Director 2003 – 2009

Richard Alspach (Independent - Appointed)

Farmer at Arapohue

Federated Farmers throughout the 1980's, including National Dairy Section Chair 1989-91

Animal Health Board 1990-1996 Chair

Northland Conservation 1997-2002 Board Member

Kaipara District Council Councillor 1998-2010 (last 6 as Deputy Mayor)

Northland Foundation 2017- present board member

Bronwyn Williamson (Elected)

Dairy farmer at Arapohue

Arapohue School Chair Board of Trustees

Dargaville and Rugby Sports Club held most positions now Life member

Federated Farmers committee member

Northland Rugby Union first female board member 2017 - present

Peter Harding (Independent - Appointed)

Horticulturalist from Maungatapere (originally from Dargaville with extensive family links)

Has worked within the Council parks industry in the south Auckland area as contract manager of sports parks and in Kaipara DC as parks and rec officer

Kelly Bryers (Elected)

Bank manager in Dargaville

9yrs of banking experience with ASB, however the most recent has been 10yrs as Branch Manager for the National Bank (since has been bought by ANZ)

Exceptional management skills

Dargaville High School Board member

Northern Wairoa Netball Centre executive committee member

Alan Russek (Independent - Appointed)

Principal at Dargaville Primary School
NW Principal Sport Assoc. 2010-14 Chair
Tai Tokerau South Cluster RTLB Advisory Group 2012-14 member
Tai Tokerau Primary Principal Council 2008-14 member
NW RTLB Cluster 2007-10 Chair
Kauri Coast Surfcasting Charitable Trust 2008 – 2014 board member

Ray Dixon (Independent - Appointed)

Downer Group, Operations Manager for Kaipara – lives in Dargaville
Northland Community Response Forum member 2016-present
Dargaville Community Development Board member 2015-present



The Sportsville Dargaville facility which overlooks the six sports courts

What were the learnings for Sport Northland?

- That this project was a perfect example of a community-led development.
- That we can and should play the pivotal role as a champion for major community sports facility projects. *“But for us to be involved, a project needs to be prioritised in the Northland Sports Facilities Plan so that we can be confident we’re committing time and effort to the right project in the right location.”*
- That our experience in fundraising is valuable: we know the key people, we’re trusted, we have a good track record and have dealt with funders for many years.
- That we have to be patient, not everything happens quickly.

- That local people do really care: once construction began, two individuals promised to cover any shortfall in meeting building costs until promised funds became available.
- That funders like public access (rather than private use) facilities.
- That we need to commit our resource and stick to that commitment – for us it was board secretariat role and good practice advice and support, both in and out of board meetings. The KCRS Board needed to understand that it (not Sport Northland) was the owner and driver of the project.

The last word

The Sportsville facility has been a conspicuous success and illustrates what's possible when people and organisations agree to work in a co-ordinated way. It's more than achieving economies of scale: it's probably more about the *social dividend* for Dargaville when local people appreciate what each party brings to the table – and the hard-won knowledge that, even in a small community, great things can be achieved by working together. It doesn't mean that everything goes easily and even now there are challenges to be resolved about how best to manage the new facility.

But the future is positive because Dargaville people have already proven to themselves (and the rest of Northland) that they are capable of "*learning by doing.*"

For more information

Sportsville Dargaville Video Case Study: <https://youtu.be/-LNPMXHzRDA>

Sportsville Dargaville Website: www.sportsvilledargaville.com

Sportsville Dargaville Facebook: sportsvilledargaville

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