

NEW ZEALAND  
THOROUGHBRED **RACING**



# NZTR Venue Plan *Final Report*

## PHASE 1

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# 1. Executive Summary - The Need for Change

At the end of January 2019 NZTR went to the industry with a plan, the result of a year's work.

We invited participants to meet with us and tell us if they disagreed with what was in that plan and we invited regional solutions from those who knew their area best. A handful of regions took up that challenge and it was reflected in their submissions.

We acknowledge that there will be some clubs which are disappointed with NZTR's final decision, but we encourage those clubs to instead embrace this change as an opportunity. We appreciate the hard work that the committees and members of those clubs, and other volunteers, have put in over the years and want to thank them for their efforts on behalf of the industry. It is important to note that the decisions NZTR is making now regarding venues are not a reflection of the efforts of those people but are, instead, a reflection of the state of the industry and the significant issues it is facing.

Clubs need to be proud of their history but should build on that history. We urge them to aspire to a bright new future, where they race at a facility which is fit for purpose and offer stakes which were once the stuff of dreams.

Rather than becoming a footnote in New Zealand's racing history, these clubs are being offered an opportunity to allow them to scale new heights. Instead of pouring funds into patching crumbling infrastructure, those funds can be used to establish their race days as not-to-be-missed occasions by owners, trainers, punters and the public.

This is the first plank in a platform for growth as NZTR reshapes our industry for the future. Change is always challenging, and it takes courage to take the first steps. Racing has shied away from making those courageous decisions in the past. A raft of prior commissions and reports – Finlay, Reid, McCarthy et al. – have all stated the obvious. We have too many racecourses and we cannot sustain them all. Each of these commissions and reports have had their recommendations ignored.

The appetite for change was tested again last year with the release of the Messara report. This encouraged NZTR to release its venue plan consultation document.

Most submissions and feedback on the consultation document agreed that New Zealand cannot continue to maintain the number of racecourses it currently has. This was confirmed at the meetings held around the country, where more than 290 people turned out to consider the future of racing in their region.

Discussions were robust but at each location the indication was that industry participants were looking to NZTR for leadership. Accordingly, the Board of NZTR has shown leadership with the release of these decisions, following careful consideration of the 75 submissions and other feedback received.

Many submissions lacked vision, often contained factual errors, and were mired in what had gone before, rather than focussing on the potential of the future and the changing world in which racing now competes.

This meant that well-considered, intelligent, aspirational submissions shone more brightly.

The one region which embraced the challenge of creating a regional solution was Taranaki. At the meeting in New Plymouth, an impassioned speech where the speaker implored his fellow club members to “get over emotion” and reminded them they were all “Taranaki proud” led to a plea to “let’s get together and lead the way, otherwise we are just wasting time.”

By the close of that meeting, a steering group had been established and the first meeting scheduled.

Taranaki’s submission addressed the issue of what might work for their region, offering various potential solutions. The submission took emotion and parochialism out of the equation and instead focused on what could work for the Taranaki region and New Zealand racing as a whole.

We also received well considered, detailed submissions from the Whangarei RC and Otago RC that set out a clear vision for what racing could look like in their respective regions in the future.

Compared with this, there were submissions which, while they may have been passionate, simply failed to engage with the issues or provide a considered argument to support their case. A lack of understanding regarding how clubs are funded, and the level of investment required by NZTR to keep 48 venues fit for purpose was also apparent. The cost to the industry to stage an average mid-week race day is \$37,500 (excluding stakes and RIU costs and the costs to owners of racing such as transport etc) yet we constantly read of clubs claiming not to cost the industry anything.

The changes we are implementing are not the final answer but the beginning of a process which will create the industry to which we all aspire.

The racing model is continuing to change with punters requiring consistency of track surfaces and their experience of racing, along with familiarity with venues and awareness of participants. Owners are looking for an improved experience and relationship with clubs, and trainers are seeking the ability to campaign their horses at tracks which provide consistent surfaces within an appropriate distance from their training base, at a lower cost to owners.

Clubs, rather than doing what they've always done and getting what they've always got, need to think differently about how they engage with a wider audience. There needs to be more focus on improving the customer focus at venues, looking after owners and participants better and increasing the engagement with wagering.

The community provides thoroughbred racing with a social license to operate yet this is increasingly under pressure. To maintain this, we are, rightly, required to continually evolve in the areas of animal welfare, integrity and health and safety.

There are venues which are unable, or unwilling, to live up to these changing needs and responsibilities. In some cases, clubs have recognised the need to adapt and that their future is more secure at another venue and have relocated of their own volition. NZTR will continue to work with those clubs and those who we have decided should race at a new venue to ensure their transition is conducted efficiently.

NZTR is committed to the venue review process going forward and acknowledges that the future beyond the 2019/20 season will be shaped around the development of synthetic tracks and substantial investment in our remaining turf tracks.

The second phase of NZTR's review of venues will not only consider the timing of funding for synthetic tracks, but also the numbers of horses racing and their location, the financial performance of clubs and the implementation of recommendations from the Messara review.

## 2. The Process

On Tuesday 29 January, NZTR released a draft venue plan it had developed to position the thoroughbred industry for the future (the *Consultation Document*) and requested feedback on the venue plan by Tuesday 19 March 2019. The process behind the development of the draft venue plan set out in the Consultation Document evolved from the NZ Racing Board/Codes Future Venues Plan initiative that had been commenced by the NZ Racing Board and the three codes before the commissioning of the Messara report.

As part of the consultation process on the draft venue plan, NZTR Management led regional discussion sessions on the plan in Christchurch, Dunedin, Gore, Blenheim and Greymouth in the South Island and in Auckland, New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Matamata in the North Island.

NZTR received more than 75 submissions (or letters in support of submissions) with 29 from clubs; 19 from individuals and others; 8 from councils or mayors; 7 from RIOs and sub-groups; 7 from trainers or jockeys; three from MPs; and 2 petitions.

NZTR Management and the NZTR Board have carefully considered all submissions and supporting correspondence or other information received during the consultation process and feedback from the regional discussion sessions referred to above and have met on various occasions to discuss the same and consider its impact on the draft venue plan set out in the Consultation Document.

The NZTR Board met on 26 March and 4 April to consider and finalise its final venue plan for the 2019/20 racing season and, in particular, finalise the decisions on venues set out in Section 5 of this document. As part of the process for the 2019/20 season, it is proposed that NZTR Management meet with each club affected directly by the decisions set out in Section 5 to:

- (a) further explain the decision made in respect of its venue and the basis on which that decision was made; and
- (b) discuss a transition process for the club to commence racing at the new racing venue proposed for it and the club's plans.

NZTR Management and the NZTR Board will consider venues for the 2024/25 racing season onwards based on the submissions, correspondence, information and feedback referred to above with the aim of releasing a final venue plan for 2024/25 onwards in the second half of this year following a further consideration of the venues in each region.

NZTR acknowledges that there is a good deal of uncertainty regarding what the industry will look like, and what its needs will be, in 2024/25 given the potential impact of the implementation of the Messara report amongst other things. Accordingly, it is proposed that the decisions NZTR makes in the second half of this year on racing venues for 2024/25 onwards will be reviewed by it well in advance of that season to take into account:

- (a) the impact of implementation of the Messara report;
- (b) changes in horse numbers and their location;
- (c) the potential introduction of synthetic tracks and their impact;
- (d) the financial position of the relevant clubs and the overall performance and future viability of their race meetings; and
- (e) any changes in the relevant venues and their facilities.

In the meantime, NZTR will work with clubs (including those affected by the decisions set out in section 5 of this document) to help them build modern, fit-for-purpose facilities and provide the on-course experience expected and deserved by owners and other industry participants and enthusiasts.

# 3. The Rationale

The rationale behind the review of venues was discussed in Sections 1 and 2 of the Consultation Document. Rather than repeat those sections in full, NZTR wants to remind the industry of the key metrics highlighted in the Consultation Document and focus on some key issues facing the industry. NZTR also wants to make it clear that its venue plan is simply one of the areas identified in the Messara report. If the industry is to reach the heights to which we all aspire, other key initiatives in that report will also need to be addressed.

## **Key Industry Metrics**

The following key statistics show the current state of the NZ thoroughbred racing industry and the challenges it is facing:

- ▶ The thoroughbred foal crop has declined by 22.0% over the last 10 years and individual thoroughbred starters in NZ have declined by 18.6% over the same period.
- ▶ There are 16.8% fewer thoroughbred races run in New Zealand now compared to 10 years ago.
- ▶ Domestic turnover on NZ thoroughbred racing has declined by 14.4% in 10 years.
- ▶ On-course attendance at NZ thoroughbred meetings has fallen by 22.3% in the last 6 years.
- ▶ The average ownership share size has declined from 27.4% to 19.8% since FY09
- ▶ The average age of the thoroughbred owner has increased from 54 to 57 in 10 years.
- ▶ New racehorse owners are not being provided with an experience that will attract a long-term interest (only 1 in 4 new owners are advocates of horse ownership)
- ▶ Pressure on up to 4 NZ Group 1 races to maintain their Group 1 status after the current season, based on new international rules.

In order to reverse the trends shown in these key statistics, we need to make significant changes to the industry.

## ***Significant Issues facing the Industry***

There are other significant issues facing the industry.

The cost of racing and running race meetings will almost certainly increase due to cost increases including the recent increase in the minimum wage. The cost of holding race meetings at remote venues (including for example RIU Stewards costs and broadcasting costs) and the costs of transporting horses to those meetings are likely in NZTR's view to impact over time on the viability of those meetings from an industry perspective.

In addition, the industry faces significant costs in ensuring that its venues meet increasingly stringent Health & Safety requirements and Earthquake standards and that tracks are up to the required standard for safe racing. The Messara report estimated that capital expenditure of \$294 million was required to bring all our current 48 venues up to the appropriate standard. The Report then stated (correctly in NZTR's view) that such a level of expenditure was "considered to be excessive, unacceptable and an unsatisfactory allocation of industry funds...".

In NZTR's view, the industry's funds (which are limited) need to be spent, in a much more focused way in the future, over a smaller number of venues. Otherwise, the industry is not going to be able to reach the aspirations NZTR and the wider industry have for the future of racing in New Zealand. Most clubs do not, unfortunately, have strong enough balance sheets to support the borrowing required to fund the expenditure needed to bring their venues up to the standard required.

As an industry we do, therefore, need to take a different approach to venues.

# 4. Key Themes from the Submissions

The following are some key themes grouped into categories from the submissions and discussions in the regional forums:

## **Participation**

- ▶ All the meetings were conducted in a respectful manner with agreement that we have too many venues and a grudging acceptance that some need to go.
- ▶ Reluctance to admit publicly that venues within their region should close, but willingness to agree that the proposed structure in other regions would work.
- ▶ History presented as a reason for a club to remain at its venue with little other supporting argument.
- ▶ Support from councils, mayors and MPs, focused predominantly on the importance of the racing club to the region but with little indication as to the level of, or indeed if there was any, support to the club from the council.
- ▶ In the process of creating an argument to continue racing at their own venue, some clubs pointed at other venues which should be closed instead.
- ▶ Some clubs expressed a vision for the future of their region and the desire to engage with other clubs in that region but were frustrated when others would not entertain discussion.
- ▶ A handful of clubs presented well thought-out and well-illustrated visions for their future which went beyond just maintaining their current level of racing and training.

### **Northern Region**

- ▶ Enthusiasm at the Auckland meeting – at least from the ARC and Counties - to work together for the future of thoroughbred racing. It was also stated the three Auckland clubs needed to get together around the table, and Avondale was encouraged to examine what its future could look like.
- ▶ There was a focus at the Matamata meeting on the Greenfields venue and the logistics of how a race meeting might work on a synthetic track at Cambridge and whether training tracks would be affected during construction of the track.
- ▶ A level of frustration that delays mean the synthetic track will not be in place for this winter and the possible impacts this might have.
- ▶ Te Teko questioned why their volunteers should work out the next four years knowing the venue would be closed and while they wanted to see racing thrive and might enjoy racing at another venue, felt they needed to have a discussion with their committee as to their future at their venue.

### **Central Region**

- ▶ Awapuni attendees stated they were looking for leadership and positive direction from NZTR.
- ▶ RACE indicated their door was open to talk to any club about what might happen in the future to grow racing in the region.
- ▶ Suggested a small group come together to talk about what shape things could take in the region, with Foxton utilised – RACE, Foxton, Levin and Otaki need to talk.
- ▶ Conversation around how a regional solution might work – specifically Taranaki, where after 20-30 years of acrimony a steering group has been established made up of representatives from all the clubs (and one harness representative) to move this forward.

### **Southern Region**

- ▶ South Island faces challenges of geography and a synthetic track at Riccarton holds the key to how things are structured in the future.
- ▶ A lot of resistance to any change in some places, most specifically the West Coast (which raised previous Ministerial intervention – eg RD Muldoon and Kumara).
- ▶ Feedback from clubs such as Wyndham – which has relocated – was positive, “We walked away from our venue and have been better off because of that.”

### ***Importance of Community***

- ▶ Concern expressed about one-day clubs which are linked to community/tourism and how losing their traditional venues might impact on the future.
- ▶ The argument that sponsors and racegoers would not travel to an alternative venue was also raised in defence of a change of location.
- ▶ The prevailing attitude seemed to be that country clubs because they are “picnic venues” do not need to do any more than provide an area where racegoers can picnic. There was little included which was aspirational in this area, with clubs not indicating aspects of their race day which could be improved upon, let alone improvements in facilities to address Health & Safety issues etc.

### ***General / Other***

- ▶ Feeling that the industry is currently stalled while we wait to see what becomes of the Messara report. Meanwhile punters are deserting racing due to lack of consistency with tracks.
- ▶ Agreement that consolidation will give savings on big ticket items such as rates/insurances etc.
- ▶ Queries around dual code venues and what discussions had been undertaken with HRNZ (Future Venue Plan)
- ▶ Concern expressed about the operating costs of the NZRB and would tracks need to close if cuts were made there. Comments also concerning stakes being maintained by borrowing.
- ▶ Declining foal crop and dwindling horse numbers was also regularly mentioned (not enough horses to maintain our current level of racing).
- ▶ The void between stakes and the costs involved in getting horses to the races was stressed by a trainer who stated ideally, he would only travel his horses within an hour and a half radius from his training property.
- ▶ A number of clubs remained convinced in their written submissions that the objective of the venue plan was to allow NZTR to obtain either their land or the money the sale of their land would realise, despite it being explained in both the Consultation Document, and at the nine meetings that this was not the intention.
- ▶ Very few submissions addressed the issues of providing a better experience for owners, punters and racegoers or acknowledged that they could do things much better.

## 5. Final Decisions for 2019/20

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that 10 clubs cease to race at their venues from 2019/20 onwards. After carefully considering the submissions, information, letters of support and feedback received in response to the Consultation Document, NZTR has changed its view in respect of three of those 10 clubs.

NZTR's final decisions in respect of all 10 clubs (which are set out in detail below) are based on the key guiding principles and the animal welfare and Health and Safety considerations set out in the Consultation Document, and reflect NZTR's view on:

- (a) each club's current and potential monetisation of its race meetings;
- (b) the standard of the facilities at the club's venue from a racing, customer and Health and Safety perspective;
- (c) the optimal configuration of venues in the particular region based on the venue classifications set out in the Consultation Document, and taking into account, amongst other things, the total investment that would, in its view, need to be made (at the cost of the industry as a whole) in the current venues in that region if they were all still to be used for racing; and
- (d) the impact on the industry as a whole (including participants such as owners, trainers, jockeys and the betting public) of the relevant club continuing to race at its venue instead of the venue determined by NZTR.

As indicated earlier in this document, NZTR intends releasing its final decisions on racing venues from 2024/25 onwards in the second half of this year.

*The map represents the final NZTR Venue Plan to be incorporated into the 2019/20 racing calendar*



**PHASE 1**

Existing - no longer required ●  
Existing - retained ●

## **Northern Region**

### **Dargaville RC**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Dargaville RC cease to race at Dargaville and race at Ruakaka instead from 2019/20 onwards.

The Dargaville RC made a short submission that it should continue to race at Dargaville but did not provide any detailed information or substantive grounds in support of its submission.

In NZTR's view, there was nothing in the Club's submission nor in any of the other feedback or submissions it received in response to the Consultation Document to persuade it that the Club should continue to race at Dargaville. NZTR notes in this regard that the Dargaville RC has not successfully completed a race meeting at Dargaville since 2015/16, with its November 2016 meeting being abandoned after three races due to inconsistencies with the track.

NZTR's overall view is that only one racing venue is required in the far North based on horse population numbers and the need to reduce costs for owners. Accordingly, NZTR's final decision is that the Dargaville RC race at Ruakaka from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR is willing to work with the Dargaville RC and the Whangarei RC to help agree the basis on which Dargaville would race at Ruakaka and to assist the Dargaville RC with the transition to racing at Ruakaka.

NZTR would also be willing to support the Club in selling its racecourse (should it decide to do so) and using the proceeds to secure a positive future for the Club and racing north of Auckland. The Whangarei RC made a submission in which it proposed the development of a thoroughbred training and racing centre at Ruakaka. The Dargaville RC could participate in this initiative should it proceed.

The Club could also use the proceeds from the sale of its racecourse to fund a strong feature race day at Ruakaka that its members and other racing supporters would want to attend.

### **Thames JC**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Thames JC cease to race at Thames and race at Te Aroha instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR did not receive a submission from the Thames JC, nor did it receive any submissions from anyone else, on this proposal.

NZTR notes that the Club has not been able to race at Thames on its scheduled race dates in recent seasons and raced successfully at Te Aroha in January 2019. NZTR believes that the Club has made the right decision in moving to race at Te Aroha.

NZTR's final decision is that the Thames JC race at Te Aroha from 2019/20 onwards. Harness has indicated that it may want to continue racing at Thames. In NZTR's view, this is not a reason to continue to support thoroughbred racing at Thames.

NZTR notes that the Club owns the racecourse at Thames. Income the Club receives from renting the venue to the harness club for its meetings can be used by the Club to fund stakes at its future meetings at Te Aroha.

The Club and Racing Te Aroha are both administered by the TRAC Group. As a result, arrangements for Thames to race at Te Aroha have already been successfully completed.

## **Central Region**

### **Wairoa RC**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Wairoa RC cease to race at Wairoa and race at Gisborne instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR received a detailed submission from the Club that it should continue to race at Wairoa together with letters in support of that submission, all of which have been carefully considered by NZTR.

It has been difficult to reach a final recommendation on Wairoa given the geographical issues associated with the logical alternative venues, both of which are a reasonable distance, on difficult roads, from Wairoa. It would, therefore, be difficult for members of the Club and racing supporters in Wairoa to travel to Gisborne, or potentially Hastings, for race meetings.

In view of these geographical considerations, NZTR has decided that the Club can continue to race at Wairoa until (and including) the 2023/24 season when its future will be reconsidered at the same time, and on the same basis, as the future of other clubs whose venues are recommended for closure in the 2024/25 season is considered. The Club has demonstrated that it has strong community support and support from the wider industry. In addition, it would be difficult in NZTR's view for the Club to maintain that strong community support if it was to race at Gisborne or Hastings.

However, there are issues with the standard of the facilities at Wairoa that cannot be ignored. Accordingly, the decision that the Club continue to race at Wairoa is conditional on the Club meeting with NZTR as soon as is practicable to identify the work that the Club will need to carry out for NZTR to support racing at Wairoa until the 2023/24 season. By way of example, the Club will need to install a plastic running rail (something which will be required of all clubs that do not currently have plastic running rails).

If the identified work is not carried out to NZTR's satisfaction, then it would not support the Club continuing to race at Wairoa. Subject to the identified work being carried out, NZTR would also work with the Club to help improve the overall performance of its race meetings and, subject to a proposed new club funding policy, utilise its community support to create value for the wider industry.

Under this decision, the current dates structure for racing on the East Coast would be retained. That is, there would be a one-day meeting at Gisborne followed by a two-day meeting at Wairoa.

In reaching this decision, we note that we did not receive a submission from the Poverty Bay Turf Club on the proposal that the Wairoa RC race at Gisborne or that there be a two-day meeting at Gisborne.

### **Stratford RC**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Stratford RC cease to race at Stratford and race at New Plymouth instead from 2019/20 onwards.

As set out earlier in this document, the clubs in the Taranaki formed a working group, led by Carey Hobbs, to explore a solution for the venues in that region in response to the Consultation Document. NZTR received a paper arising out of that working group process on a sustainable future for racing in Taranaki which sets out three potential options for Stratford, ranging from the Club selling its racecourse and investing the proceeds in training facilities at Hawera to the Club maintaining its racecourse as a training-only facility. NZTR is unclear, however, whether the Stratford RC supports any of the options proposed for it in the paper. In this regard, NZTR received a submission by email, seemingly sent on behalf of the Stratford RC, to the effect that the Club continue to race at Stratford and an online petition in support of that submission "signed" by 1,582 people.

NZTR supports the steps being taken by the clubs in Taranaki to come to a regional solution and is willing to work with the clubs to help them achieve that goal if that would be of assistance.

Irrespective of the outcome of that process, NZTR's final decision for the region is that the Stratford RC not race at Stratford from 2019/20 onwards. NZTR is supportive of the Club racing at either New Plymouth or Hawera and would be willing to assist the Club with a move to either venue in accordance with the regional response subject to a final decision being reached in respect of the Hawera racecourse's future for racing from 2024/25 onwards. NZTR is aware that the Club's constitution provides, in effect, that the Club must race at Te Kapua Park in Stratford and notes that the Club's committee can recommend to members that the constitution be changed, by special resolution, to permit the Club to race elsewhere if it wishes.

In reaching its final decision regarding Stratford, NZTR is aware that, as with the Wairoa RC, Stratford enjoys strong community support. However, Stratford's proximity to New Plymouth and Hawera means that the Club's members and the wider community in Stratford can continue to enjoy racing at a nearby venue. The strong community support that "tenant" clubs racing at Awapuni have continued to enjoy even though they no longer race at their "home" venues indicates that the Club can maintain its identity and links to its community, and retain strong community support, even though it is racing outside of Stratford. In this regard, the Club could fund transport for its members and other local racing supporters to meetings at its new venue and develop a strong feature meeting at that new venue that its members and other supporters wanted to attend.

## **South Island**

### **Marlborough RC**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Marlborough RC cease to race at Blenheim and race at Riccarton instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR received a detailed submission from the Club that it should continue to race at Blenheim together with various letters in support of that submission, all of which have been carefully considered by NZTR. NZTR also received a detailed submission from the Canterbury Jockey Club on venues in Canterbury, the West Coast and Marlborough which NZTR has carefully considered.

Based on the submissions received and recognising the importance of the Club's facility as a transport hub for horses traveling between islands and the importance of maintaining a thoroughbred racing presence in the upper part of the South Island, NZTR's final decision is that the Club race at Blenheim, and retain its traditional two day meeting in April, for the 2019/20 season, which will enable the Club to hold its centenary meeting at Blenheim.

Beyond 2019/20, NZTR sees the future of racing at Blenheim as potentially being a part of the West Coast racing circuit in January, with a one-day meeting at either the start or end of that circuit, to take advantage of holidaymakers in the region over the summer. Another potential option could see the club working alongside the local industry with an event aligned to the annual Food & Wine Festival. NZTR recommends that the Club work with the local harness club to obtain the best outcome for both codes given that there is a harness meeting at Blenheim in January. NZTR is willing to assist the Club in this process and to work with the Club in identifying a date that will work best, either as part of the West Coast circuit or with the Food & Wine Festival. NZTR's support for racing at Blenheim will depend on these matters being advanced and resolved before the dates calendar for the 2020/21 season is finalised.

The decision that the Club continue to race at Blenheim is also conditional on the Club meeting with NZTR as soon as is practicable to identify the work that the Club will need to carry out for NZTR to support racing at Blenheim until the 2023/24 season. By way of example, the Club will need to install a plastic running rail. If the identified work is not carried out to NZTR's satisfaction, then it would not support the Club continuing to race at Blenheim.

Subject to the identified work being carried out, NZTR would also work with the Club to help improve the overall performance of its race meetings and, subject to a proposed new club funding policy, utilise its community support to create value for the wider industry.

The future of the Club from 2024/25 onwards will be reconsidered by NZTR at the same time, and on the same basis, as the future of other clubs whose venues are recommended for closure in the 2024/25 season is considered.

### **West Coast Clubs**

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Westland RC and the Reefton JC cease to race at their respective venues from 2019/20 onwards, with all racing on the West Coast to take place at Kumara and Greymouth.

NZTR received a joint submission from the four West Coast clubs and various letters of support as well as separate submissions from the Reefton JC and the Reefton Trotting Club together with a petition supporting racing at Reefton signed by 1,004 people. NZTR also received a detailed submission from the Canterbury Jockey Club on venues in Canterbury, the West Coast and Marlborough. NZTR has carefully considered all these submissions and letters of support.

NZTR received various comments during the consultation process to the effect that, in the case of the West Coast, there are two approaches – either close all venues or retain them all. NZTR does not agree with the “all or none” approach but accepts that, given the weather conditions that can be experienced on the West Coast, scheduling four race meetings at only two venues over a short period of time could be problematic. NZTR is also of the view, however, that there are too many venues on the West Coast for horse numbers and the population base.

After carefully considering the submissions and other feedback received in response to the Consultation Document, NZTR remains of the view that the Westland RC should cease racing at Hokitika. A key factor in this decision is a concern about the safety of racing at Hokitika. It is a very small, tight track with near flat cambers on its bends, and the bend just after the winning post is narrow and tightly turning. This safety concern is heightened by the fact that the track is the only right-handed one in the South Island. As a result, many of the horses and riders competing at the club's meetings are not accustomed to racing right-handed.

Based on the above, NZTR's final decision in relation to the Westland RC is that it ceases to race at Hokitika and race at either Greymouth or Kumara instead from 2019/20 onwards. NZTR is willing to work with the Westland RC and the chosen "host" club to help agree the basis on which the Westland RC would race at that new venue and is also willing assist the Club with the transition to racing at that venue.

In relation to the Reefton JC, NZTR has decided that the Club continue to race (with conditions) at Reefton until the 2023/24 season. NZTR sees the benefit of retaining Reefton as a racing venue for the time being as it provides additional accommodation for horses racing on the West Coast circuit and can potentially provide better track conditions (and an alternative venue) if there is a significant rain event on the West Coast while the circuit is being held. In coming to this decision, NZTR also took into account the supportive submission from the Canterbury JC.

The future of the Club from 2024/25 onwards will be reconsidered by NZTR at the same time, and on the same basis, as the future of other clubs whose venues are recommended for closure in the 2024/25 season is considered.

NZTR is conscious that the Reefton track is (like Hokitika) very small and needs work to improve it as a racing venue. Accordingly, its final decision that the Club race at Reefton until (and including) the 2023/24 season is subject to the condition that NZTR meet with the Club as soon as is practicable to identify the work that the Club will need to carry out for NZTR to continue to support racing at Reefton until then. By way of example, the Club will need to install a plastic running rail. If the identified work is not carried out to NZTR's satisfaction, then it would not support the Club continuing to race at Reefton.

Subject to the identified work being carried out, NZTR would also work with the Club to help improve the overall performance of its race meetings and, subject to a proposed new club funding policy, utilise its community support to create value for the wider industry.

In view of the proposal that the Marlborough RC potentially hold a new meeting as part of the West Coast circuit, NZTR is willing to work with the West Coast clubs and the Marlborough RC on this proposal and the further development of the West Coast circuit.

### *Waimate RC*

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Waimate RC cease to race at Waimate and race at Oamaru instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR did not receive a submission from the Club on this proposal. However, the submission from the Oamaru JC stated that the Waimate RC is agreeable to racing at Oamaru.

On the basis that the Club appears to be agreeable to racing at Oamaru, NZTR's final decision is that the Waimate RC race at Oamaru from 2019/20 onwards where it can build a sustainable future for itself and its members. NZTR is willing to work with both Clubs to help agree the basis on which the Waimate RC races at Oamaru and to assist the Waimate RC with that transition.

### *Winton JC*

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Winton JC cease to race at Winton and race at Gore instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR received a detailed submission from the Club that it should continue to race at Winton together with various letters in support of that submission, all of which have been carefully considered by NZTR.

Despite these submissions and supporting letters, NZTR remains of the view that the Club should race at another venue from 2019/20 onwards. There is a surplus of tracks in Southland which is not justified by either horse numbers or the population base. Winton is predominantly a harness venue operating a single thoroughbred meeting and there was no thoroughbred racing there for around 20 years or so when the Club raced at Invercargill instead. NZTR's understanding is that Winton would still be able to be used as a thoroughbred training centre even though there would be no thoroughbred racing at the venue.

Although the initial proposal was for the Club to race at Gore, NZTR's final decision is that the Club ceases to race at Winton from 2019/20 onwards. NZTR is agreeable to the Club racing at a venue in Southland other than Gore if that was its wish and is willing to work with the Club to help identify, and finalise the move to, a new venue for it.

NZTR is also willing to work with all the clubs in Southland on developing an enhanced regional solution for the future of racing and training in the area.

### *Wyndham RC*

In the Consultation Document, NZTR proposed that the Wyndham RC cease to race at Wyndham and race at Gore instead from 2019/20 onwards.

NZTR did not receive a submission from the Club on this proposal.

The Club raced at Gore in the current season and informal feedback from the Club at the regional discussion session in Invercargill was that it was happy with the move to Gore. On that basis, NZTR's final recommendation is that the Wyndham RC race at Gore from 2019/20 onwards where it can build a sustainable future for itself and its members.

As indicated above in relation to the Winton JC, NZTR is also willing to work with all the clubs in Southland on developing a regional solution for the future of racing and training in the region.

### ***NZTR Board has resolved that as a first phase:***

1. The Dargaville RC race at Ruakaka from 2019/20 onwards;
2. The Thames JC race at Te Aroha from 2019/20 onwards;
3. The Wairoa RC continue to race at Wairoa in the short term but its venue from 2024/25 onwards be reconsidered by no later than 2023/24;
4. The Stratford RC race at another venue from 2019/20 onwards;
5. The Marlborough RC race at Blenheim (with its current two-day April meeting in 2019/20). From 2020/21, it would hold a one-day meeting as part of the West Coast circuit from 2020/21 with its venue from 2024/25 onwards to be reconsidered in 2023/24;
6. The Westland RC race at either Greymouth or Kumara from 2019/20 onwards;
7. The Reefton JC continue to race at Reefton in the short term but its venue from 2024/25 onwards be reconsidered by no later than 2023/24;
8. The Waimate RC race at Oamaru from 2019/20 onwards;
9. The Winton JC race at another venue from 2019/20 onwards; and
10. The Wyndham RC race at Gore from 2019/20 onwards.