

# Marlborough Equestrian Park NZ Incorporated

## Marlborough District Council 2020-21 Annual Plan Update Submission

### 1. Introduction

Thank you for providing the opportunity to present this submission to Council's 2020-21 Annual Plan Update.

Marlborough Equestrian Park (MEP) located at Botham's Bend opened for operation in September 2014 with the objective of providing a 'home' for equestrian sport and recreational endeavours for Marlborough, across all age groups and levels of ability.

The Park is governed by Marlborough Equestrian Park NZ Incorporated (MEPNZ), with the Management Committee comprised of two representatives each from four Equestrian Sport NZ discipline areas, being dressage, show jumping, eventing, and endurance/trail riding.

The development of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of the Park was completed at a cost of \$573k funded approximately 50/50 from grants, sponsorship and donated services secured by MEPNZ and from funds kindly provided by Council.

This 1<sup>st</sup> stage included the installation of core water, electricity, sewer and roading infrastructure and the construction of clubrooms, ablutions (shower and toilets), a storage shed, three all-weather dressage arenas, an all-weather show hunter arena, a premier grassed show jumping arena and secure yarding for 93 horses, as shown on the marked up Google Earth image below.



The park has also been extensively landscaped by volunteer members with the 6-year-old trees now coming into their own and providing a fantastic parklike environment.

Since its inception the MEP has continued to grow and develop into one of the top up and coming facilities of its kind in the South Island.

Since our last submission we have been busy facilitating the move of Blenheim Pony Club to the park, on improving our general infrastructure and increasing the park's usage through encouraging local training clinics and larger events.

## **2. Use of the Park and Progress**

The highlight for MEPNZ this year was hosting the 2020 South Island Show Jumping Championships. The show jumping group is one of our foundation members and their committee worked tirelessly to put on a huge show that was of a very high standard.

There were riders competing from both the North and South Islands with the majority coming from out of the district and staying on the park grounds in their horse trucks and floats.

These riders brought 220 horses, of which 92 were yarded in our permanent on-site yards, 90 were yarded in temporary yards that had to be brought in and set up in the park by volunteers, and unfortunately three horse trucks had to stay at the race-course as even with the temporary yards there wasn't sufficient yarding for all the horses that had been entered.

This competition was a great success and was well attended by locals, with the spectator car park being filled almost to capacity for both days of the two-day show.

Temporary toilets and showers also had to be hired to supplement the park's existing ablutions to cater for the large number of competitors and spectators.

The show jumping committee raised \$42 000 in sponsorship specifically for the show which helped cover prize money but also to cover the hire cost for the temporary ablution and yarding.

These large shows are important for the sport and our region. They bring visitor dollars to our district with many of the competitors staying for four nights. They also showcase the Marlborough region to visiting riders and provide aspirational goals for our up and coming local riders.

Large shows are also important for generating revenue for MEPNZ with this single show bringing in \$6,175.00.



### **3. Growth and Development**

Hosting horses in transit is an increasing source of revenue for MEPNZ and so far this year we have already hosted 73 horses over-night in transit. We have been successful in meeting our goal of publicising the park as a safe and pleasant place to stay for travelling equestrians and year on year we have seen a growth in overnighting as the word spreads through NZ's equestrian community.

We are also conscious that with the upcoming changes in the New Zealand horse racing industry and the associated uncertain future of the Waterlea Racecourse, that this provide a potential significant increase of this type of revenue if we were able to secure the overnight yarding of horses being moved inter-island by the commercial horse transport operators, which currently use the racecourse stables.

MEPNZ's usage has continued to grow and we can report that almost every weekend of the year there are bookings for the park. There are also regular clinics during week-days with visiting instructors and clinicians keeping the park busy as well as use by our local members. Membership continues to grow steadily with 13% growth in the last twelve months.

We have looked at our volunteer base and the difficulties associated with maintaining such a large facility to the current high standard. MEPNZ therefore made the decision to hire an on-site live-in caretaker, which has been hugely successful and has allowed us to not only maintain the park but also to improve the standard of our riding surfaces, which is very important for attracting competitors.

So far, we have managed to fund the park's caretaker and ground maintenance from our operational revenue, which has resulted in MEPNZ having less money to spend on new infrastructure and maintenance of equipment.

However, through dedication and hard work, we have been able to replace some of this revenue lost to park maintenance, through successful grant applications and securing sponsorship, allowing us to upgrade some of our equipment.

We are very fortunate to have the support of many local businesses, who recognise the value of grass roots sport opportunities for our community.

In the last financial year, we have purchased a larger turf mower for maintaining the show jumping premier arena and adjacent riding surfaces. The existing mower is still in use and is required for mowing the rougher grass around the car park and up on the top of the bank and roadsides. We have also purchased a weed eater and a few other small tools to make the caretaker's job easier.

We were able to do this entirely out of our operating budget, which is an excellent result and shows how financially independent and self-sustaining MEPNZ has become.

### **4. Pony Club Relocation**

Our work to assist the relocation of the Blenheim Pony Club (BPC) continues and we were very pleased to receive \$20k of funding in November 2019 from the Rata Foundation to put towards their new clubrooms and other equipment required for Pony Club to operate.

The BPC and MEPNZ have also been able to raise \$10k to put towards the project bringing the total funding contributed by MEPNZ to \$30k which, combined with Council's funding gives us a respectable total to initiate the project.

Tim Smit, who managed the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of the park's development, has agreed to come back on board to help manage the BPC club rooms through to completion and we hope to start this project shortly.

The location of the club rooms and design has been finalised and a builder has been appointed.

## 5. Proposed Stage 2 Expansion

Based on the success of the park to date and MEPNZ are very keen to move on with Stage 2 of the park's development to provide expanded facilities to cope with the increasing demand already being experienced, and to cater for future growth which we are confident we will achieve.

The extent and estimated cost of Stage 2 of the park's development will clearly be limited by funding availability but will ideally include (in order of priority):

• additional ablutions (3 toilets and 1 shower)	\$42,300
• covered yarding for 48 horses	\$356,900
• an all-purpose irrigated all-weather arena similar in size to the current dressage arenas	\$105,700
• additional pole mounted site lighting and public address system	\$52,900
• power to the overnight camping area for horse trucks and floats	\$29,400
• fenced overnighting paddocks	\$11,700
<b>Total Estimated Stage 2 Cost (Excluding GST)</b>	<b>\$598,900</b>

MEPNZ acknowledges the shared funding with Council for the park's original development and expects to similarly meet its half share of costs for this 2<sup>nd</sup> stage.

Tim Smit has kindly offered to manage this stage as an independent project manager, at no cost to MEPNZ.

Prior to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic a MEPNZ sub-committee was formed to develop Stage 2 and representatives of this sub-committee have initiated discussions with Council staff about our plans and ambitions.

Unfortunately, many funding bodies have also put their grant applications processes on hold until the world returns to something closer to normal.

We understand that the Covid-19 pandemic will likely result in many other organisations seeking funding assistance, and also result in financial duress to many in our community, which will place pressure on Council to minimise any increases in rates. We therefore accept that there is a likelihood that the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of our park will have to be delayed for 12 months, when we would be happy to re-submit on Council's 2021/22 Annual Plan.

However, we also understand that both central and local government are seeking "shovel-ready" construction projects to assist with kick-starting the economy.

We are aware of a number of projects which Council as reported in the local press, but are unsure of how soon the physical construction of some of those projects could commence.

MEPNZ would like it to be known that the design of a number of the proposed Stage 2 projects is well advanced, allowing construction to commence in the next 2 to 3 months. The projects are also of a size and value that they would be able to provide work for some of the smaller construction firms which are unlikely to be able to secure any of the larger projects Council has identified.

## **6. Conclusion**

Marlborough Equestrian Park NZ would like to sincerely thank Council and their staff for their great assistance so far on this project.

We are pleased to be able to say that the park continues to be a big success and we look forward to seeing it move into the next stage of its development.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to this submission.