

Howitt Park Master Plan



November 2015

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Introduction

Howitt Park is found in a high profile location on both sides of the Princes Highway in Bairnsdale. The park runs alongside the beautiful Mitchell River and Mitchell River Backwater and is well known for its diversity of user groups and high levels of utilisation. The park is Crown land which is managed by Council who has implemented an Instrument of Delegation that appoints the Howitt Park Management Committee as the Incorporated Association to directly manage the Park. This Committee is made up of representatives of each user group.

A conceptual level master plan was developed for this site in 1998 as part of the Mitchell River Environs, Local Structure & Development Plan. Many of the projects identified as part of this planning exercise are still current today.

Howitt Park is a very well used recreation area and has a broad range of user types. Clubs range from soccer, rowing, dragon boats, tennis, bowling, triathlon and the monthly market. It is also a very popular spot for locals and visitors alike to utilise the playgrounds, BMX track, public toilets and river frontage.

There are some unique challenges which affect the future development of this site including the potential for flooding during periods of high rain fall and also that the site was used as a landfill.

The entire Park is not under the management of the Committee which is reflected in the Landscape plan but issues that affect all areas of the park have been raised. The Master Plan however does not cover the areas directly managed by Council in detail. For the area under management of the Committee, Council does provide a maintenance grant and some of the maintenance tasks are completed as outlined in their Instrument of Delegation.

The master plan has been formulated based on a priority ranking scale from Very High through to low, with the understanding that it is not practical to complete all of the projects identified but the plan allows for well thought out development as opportunities arise. The Master Plan does not aim to address maintenance issues but has a focus on utilisation and infrastructure projects. The highest priority projects identified in the Master Plan include additional storage for the rowing club and dragon boats, pavilion redevelopment, main oval levelling and other smaller projects.

Acknowledgements

Hands on Community Solutions would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Howitt Park Management Committee, the other main users of the facilities and other key stakeholders who provided detailed input into the development of the plan. Also, to the East Gippsland Shire Council Staff who provided background information and support for this Master Plan, along with the financial contribution to complete the project. To the individuals and community members whose input and advice has been essential to the development of this report.

Methodology

The following Methodology was completed for this Master Planning project:

- A start up meeting was conducted with the Committee of Management and key user groups.
- Research, consultation and an industry review was completed.
- A detailed site inspection was completed.
- Consultation was held with all users of the reserve and other important community groups to discuss the process and identify key issues and priorities.
- A Draft Master Plan was developed and provided to the Committee, User Groups, Council and the broader community for input.
- The Final Master Plan was adopted by the Howitt Park Committee of Management.

Research Conducted

The following section contains a review of relevant reports, information and plans in relation to the project. The key findings are summarised below:

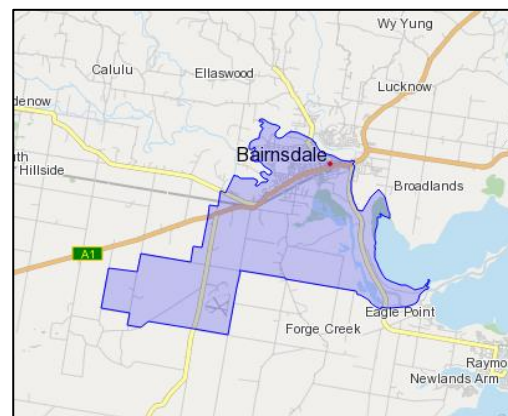
Demographic Review

East Gippsland Shire covers over 21,000 square kilometres, stretching from west of Bairnsdale to the NSW border. This diverse region make up 10 per cent of the state, with over 70 per cent as National Park, State forest or other Crown land.

At the 2011 Census the East Gippsland Shire had a total population of 42,196. Bairnsdale is a small city in the Shire of East Gippsland. Bairnsdale has an urban area population of 11,820 with 5,576 Males, 6,244 Females and a median age of 42. The city is a major regional centre of eastern Victoria along with Traralgon and Sale and the commercial centre for the East Gippsland region.



East Gippsland Shire



Bairnsdale

Literature Review

East Gippsland Shire Council – Council Plan 2013-17

Health and wellbeing has been highlighted in the Council Plan with the plan reporting that;

Lifestyle of the residents rates highly, with more people than the Victorian average reporting high levels of wellbeing, time with family, community participation and physical activity.

East Gippsland Shire residents were significantly more likely to volunteer; almost half (48.4%) reported volunteering at least once a month, compared with the Victorian average (34.3%).

Currently 71% of males are either overweight or obese compared with 46% of women and the Victorian male average of 57.2%. Council will continue to advocate for improvements in levels of nutrition, access to fresh fruit and vegetables and participation in physical activity, which together influence the levels of overweight and obese people.

Community facilities – A large geographic area with more than 40 individual communities, places significant demand on Council to provide a range of quality community facilities to meet the diverse needs of residents. This includes the provision of marinas, boat ramps, jetties, walking paths, playgrounds, sporting facilities, swimming pools, walking and cycling trails.

To prioritise facility and service needs, Council have developed a community-planning approach to working with local communities. Coupled with Councils approach to asset management, which aims to understand and manage whole-of life costs associated with planning, delivering and maintaining community infrastructure.

East Gippsland Shire Council - Strategic Plan for Sporting Infrastructure 2008

“Sporting infrastructure” is deemed to be infrastructure that caters for structured sporting activities that incorporates sporting clubs, associations and leagues, and may be sited on either Council-owned or non Council-owned land.

The Sporting Infrastructure Plan developed a hierarchy of facilities for East Gippsland which sets out the following levels. Howitt Park is a Level 2 Facility.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Regional Facilities	District Facilities	Local Facilities
Regional significance and capable of hosting state/national events.	Facilities are of important district or shire significance.	Facilities provide local events.
Professionally managed/managed by Council.	Facilities may be managed directly by Council or by committee of management.	Locally managed by Committee of Management.
Council contribute to all of the maintenance costs of the facility to ensure the high standard of service.	Expectation by community of standard of the facility to be self funding – thus Council contribute to the maintenance costs of the facility to ensure an appropriate standard of service.	Cost of management and maintenance responsibility of the local management. Council provide small annual operating subsidy and funding contribution for capital funding based on project.
Council will determine/approve the charge to user groups to ensure appropriate recouping of costs.	Council will determine/approve the charge to user groups to ensure appropriate recouping of costs.	Committee set fees to recoup operating costs.

Hierarchy of Facilities

The Plan identified that overall across the shire, there is a lack of site planning and business planning at the site level. As a recommendation – establish no less than a site overlay and business plan for all sporting infrastructure in the Shire. This should be undertaken collaboratively at the initiation and support of Council and involve active participation of the Committee of Management of each venue.

Also identified for Bairnsdale;

- The Bairnsdale City Oval, as the primary Level 1 outdoor facility in the Shire is incomplete and this status compromises the image of the venue. Noting that the current incomplete status is due in part to reported failure of the Committee of Management of its financial contribution, there is a clear option for Council to fund the completion of the facility and link that funding to Council, assuming management control over the venue.
- The planned indoor facility at Lucknow Recreation Reserve, currently limited to seniors table tennis and squash should be reviewed for potential additional scope, including volleyball, gymnastics and gymnasium facilities.
- The sports of squash and gymnastics in Bairnsdale are both without a secure home; although Squash has a potential new home if the Lucknow development proceeds.
- Basketball in Bairnsdale has user issues with the share arrangements in the BARC stadium.
- Soccer has recently moved to West Bairnsdale Oval. It needs to define its user requirements and work with Council to establish a permanent home.
- Aquatic provision in Bairnsdale warrants a more detailed review and planning.
- Ideally both outdoor and indoor infrastructure would be commonly located generating potential ongoing operating efficiencies.
- Access issues/tenancy issues with the BARC should be reviewed to link to overall aquatic strategy.
- Howitt Park – Management Structure needs to be reviewed. Fields are below flood line but are in the best condition in the shire – suggest ample water supply from adjacent river.

Please note that this study was completed in 2008 and some of the projects identified have since been implemented.

Howitt Park South - Sports Ground Assessment 2013

An inspection of all of the sports facilities at Howitt Park was undertaken in November 2013 by Echelon. Detailed findings are provided in a comprehensive report that has been used to inform the development of this Master Plan.

Some of the recommendations have already been addressed by the relevant committees but high risk items identified were;

- Soccer pitch size
 - Secure fencing
 - Athletic track tripping hazards
 - Location of soccer goals on the main oval
 - Improved signage
-

East Gippsland Shire - Annual Allocations Policy 2013

This policy applies to eligible Committees of Management over recreation reserves and/or community halls situated on Council land, Crown land or land under an acceptable deed or trust for non-profit incorporated bodies within East Gippsland Shire. The policy sets out a funding formula and the responsibilities of all parties. This policy applies to the Howitt Park Committee.

Surrounding Facilities

Bairnsdale is the Major Town for East Gippsland Shire Council and there are many recreation and leisure facilities located within the township. These include;

Facility name	Facilities/Sports	Ownership	Hierarchy (sports infrastructure plan)
Bairnsdale City Oval	Boxing Cricket Football Netball	Council	1
Bairnsdale Outdoor Pool	Swimming pool	Crown	Pool
Bairnsdale Aquatic Recreation Centre (BARC)	Badminton Basketball Volleyball Table tennis Aquatic activities Fitness	Crown	Pool/stadium
Ligar St Bairnsdale	Tennis	Crown	2
East Gippsland All Abilities Playground	Major accessible playground, public toilets, skate park	Council	1
Nagle College Bairnsdale	Indoor soccer Cricket Hockey	Private	N/a
Lucknow Recreation Reserve including the Squash & Racquetball Centre	Squash Table Tennis Football Netball Cricket	Private	N/a
Eastside Tennis Club	Tennis	Private	N/a
Seventh Day Adventist Property	Gymnastics	Private	N/a
West Bairnsdale Oval	Football Football umpire Soccer	Crown	3
World Centre	Netball Teeball Hockey	Crown	2

Wy Yung Oval	Football Netball Cricket	Council	2
Bairnsdale Bowls Club	Bowls Croquet	Private	N/a
Bairnsdale Golf Club	Golf/ bowls	Private	N/a
Bairnsdale Racecourse Reserve	Horseracing Pony club	Crown	3
Goose Gully Golf	Golf	Private	N/a
Harnham Drive Reserve	Tennis	Private	3
Aerodrome Complex	Motorcycling Automobile	Council	3

Schools in Bairnsdale

There are a broad range of schools servicing Bairnsdale;

- St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
- Lucknow Primary School
- Bairnsdale Primary School
- Bairnsdale Secondary College
- Bairnsdale Specialist School
- Bairnsdale West Primary School
- Bairnsdale Christian Community School
- Nagle College Bairnsdale
- Gippsland Grammar (Junior School)

These schools utilise Howitt Park for a range of school/interschool sports activities. The primary use is Athletics.

Nearby Towns

Bairnsdale is the regional centre for many sports, given that the smaller towns are unable to offer the full range of sports. The surrounding localities which feed Bairnsdale include; Lucknow, Wy Yung, Lindenow, Lindenow South, Eagle Point, Nicholson, Johnsonville, Bruthen, Swan Reach, Paynesville and Sarsfield.

Consultation

Consultation was undertaken with the following groups and stakeholders;

- East Gippsland Shire Council – Council Officers
 - Howitt Park Committee of Management
 - All user groups of Howitt Park
 - Relevant State Sporting Associations
 - Other Community Organisations
-

Summary of Reserve Usage

Day of Week	Usage Type	Facilities Used	Time of Year
Monday	Tri Club- Pilates Soccer- comp	Pavilion All	Summer Season Summer season
Tuesday	Social Tennis Soccer- comp	Tennis courts/rooms All	Most of the year Summer/Winter Season
Wednesday	Social Tennis Soccer- comp Little Athletics Dragon Boats	Tennis courts/rooms All Main Oval/pavilion Meeting/mid-week training River	Most of the year Summer/Winter Season Summer season All year
Thursday	Social Tennis Soccer- comp Deer Ass Meetings	Tennis courts/ rooms All Pavilion	Most of the year Winter season Bi monthly
Friday	Soccer – competition Little Athletics	Main Oval/pavilion Main Oval/pavilion	Summer/Winter Season Summer Season
Saturday	Soccer comp	Main Oval/pavilion	Events Winter season
Sunday	Tri Club Run Little Athletics Dragon boats Rotary Market	Pathways/oval Main Oval/pavilion Utilise the boat ramp on the Mitchell River Backwater and the Mitchell River Park area/ car park	Summer Season Summer Season All year Monthly All year

Note: Rowing occurs daily– Utilising the landing on the Mitchell River, the rowing shed and pavilion.

Howitt Park Utilisation

Special Events and Activities

- ✓ Carols by Candlelight – 3000 people attend
- ✓ Interschool/school/ interclub athletics carnivals
- ✓ Social/casual use of pavilion
- ✓ Social/fitness activities – walking around oval/playground/personal training
- ✓ Schools usage for other sports
- ✓ Rowing regattas
- ✓ Access to river and recreational angling which is popular particularly from the rowing landing when fish are abundant
- ✓ Mothers Day classic – running event with 500 competitors
- ✓ Cake ladies bake in the pavilion
- ✓ Rowing camps
- ✓ Mini triathlons
- ✓ Swim training in the river where access to the river is from the landing
- ✓ Annual athletics open day attracts participants from all over Victoria



Key User/Community Groups

Bairnsdale Rowing Club

The Bairnsdale Rowing Club (BRC) was established in 1872 and is credited as being one of the first regional rowing clubs in Australia. A substantial two story Clubhouse and boat storage building was home to the rowing club at the Port of Bairnsdale area.

At its peak the BRC was a highly successful club holding state wide regatta's on the Mitchell River and competing in Melbourne regatta's and was recognised as a very competitive club, having the ultimate river to train on worked well in their favour.

The Bairnsdale Rowing Club went into recession in 1965 until 1986 when a group of locals reformed the club and along with the Little Athletics received a grant to build a storage shed. The green shed is still being used today but an expansion is needed.



In 2012 Bairnsdale Rowing Club hosted the first Rowing Victoria Regatta in over 50 years.

In 2011 the BRC commenced a Learn to Row program to raise the level of participation in rowing which has been very successful. This program has grown the membership threefold and given the BRC and Mitchell River greater exposure in the community. There are now more than 50 regular rowers and many of these are juniors. As the membership and programs of the BRC grow, so has the need for extra equipment and storage space.

BRC successfully completed an adopt a school program with the Bairnsdale Secondary College first and Nagle College to introduce rowing as part of their Physical Education program.

Currently at least 19 rowing clubs, school, college and university programs use the local waterways for training camps, with many local accommodation and business providers benefiting from the rowers attending the training camps. Detailed information has been compiled into a Rowing Facilities Report in East Gippsland, which provides evidence for the investment into rowing facilities within the Shire.



Dragons Abreast Gippsland Warriors



Dragons Abreast Gippsland Waratahs was formed in 2012 initially as an exercise and support group for breast cancer survivors. Over the three years the club has grown to include supporters and other interested paddler's. Currently the Waratah Dragons have 40 members, 30 of whom are paddlers and the club regularly enters into regattas both in Victoria and New South Wales.

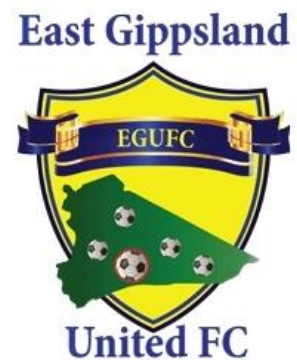
The major issue which the club faces is the storage of the large dragon boats. Currently these are stored at private houses and transported to the Park for training. Ideally they would like a storage location on site and in partnership with the Rowing Club. The Club has developed its first strategic plan.



Also, the dragon boats are launched from the boat ramp and the group often experiences challenges with boats being moored in this area and local fisherman. This situation could be improved by increasing the size of the mooring area.

East Gippsland United Football Club

The East Gippsland United Football Club (EGUFC) was formed to facilitate, promote and grow outdoor football "The World Game" in East Gippsland. EGUFC began official operations in February of 2009 with 382 members. In 2014 the club has 410 registered playing members and supports GSL men's Reserves, U21, U16, U14 Boys, U17 Girls, 2 under 12 teams, a junior summer league, men's summer league and a women's summer league. The club has reached its capacity and was oversubscribed for the junior summer program.



The EGUFC is one of the largest sporting clubs by participation in East Gippsland and has the capacity to grow, given the right infrastructure and internal support from the club.

The soccer club utilises Howitt Park for most of its training and matches but is now also using facilities at Bairnsdale West as a secondary venue. The club has an excellent strategic plan which has identified many of the infrastructure projects identified in this master plan.

The major lighting project completed in 2013 has meant that the main pitch has been created within the Athletics Track. The playing surface needs some levelling work but the lights provide an opportunity to increase evening soccer participation.

The EGUFC has long identified the lack of adequate pitches and facilities as a challenge that it wishes to address. The club recognises that it needs to work in partnership with the East Gippsland Shire Council to address its growing future needs. There are a number of options for where the club could expand in the future but it is likely that Howitt Park will be a key facility for the life of this master plan.

The EGUFC committee have identified the following facility needs in supporting its football operations:

- Two pitch configurations
- Technical areas for coaches
- Referee area
- First aid room
- Improved access to clubrooms
- Increased opportunities for fundraising
- Currently competitions split over two facilities
- Improved quality of playing surface
- Improved function room to support club functions/ travelling clubs
- Scheduling to take in other users dates and events
- Grounds subject to flooding
- Improved Kitchen/ Canteen facilities



Sunrise Rotary Markets

Since the Sunrise Rotary club was chartered in 2003 it has undertaken a variety of fund raising events which have enabled the club to donate generously to local community projects. The club continually looks for ideas which will gain a regular income stream combined with occasional larger events. The club has at present 36 members who are all dedicated in assisting with fund raising projects.

The majority of the club are engaged in professional roles in the workplace either as a company owner/manager or as an employee and are well known in the community. The Rotary Club of Bairnsdale Sunrise took over the running of the Howitt Park Market in January 2012 and has been



successfully building up the number and quality of both permanent and casual stallholders. The market now includes lots of fresh food and produce mixed in with a variety of leather goods, soaps, candles, clothes, plants, bric a brac and items that will encourage both locals and tourists to visit.

One of the group's main concerns is poor drainage in some areas which can impact greatly on the amount of sites usable if there has been heavy rain. The area could do with some levelling and drainage in areas. Also the toilet facilities are not identified with adequate signage and are of poor quality for both the stallholders and the visitors to the market. Finally it would be greatly beneficial to have some storage for the Rotary trailer on the Howitt Park site.



Howitt Park Tennis Club

The Howitt Park Tennis Club has about 30 social tennis players that use the facilities each week for tennis and lunch but there have been no competition teams for the last four years as district tennis in the region has really declined in recent years.

The facilities were upgraded about 5 years ago including re-surfacing and a new club house with major funding from a SRV grant. Sometimes the Howitt Park Tennis Club hires out the club house for social functions. Although they are happy with the facilities as they are now and there is enough parking to meet their needs, they would like the access to the public toilets in the park to be upgraded.

Howitt Park Little Athletics Club

The athletics club has had stable membership numbers of around 120 members in recent years. The closest nearby club is located in Sale, so Bairnsdale is the main choice for East Gippsland residents. Many of the local schools also use the Athletics Track for the school and interschool athletics carnivals. They have had great success running their open day which attracts competitors from all over Victoria.

The clubs mission statement is; Through the enjoyment of Athletics, develop positive attitudes and a healthy lifestyle for our children, families and community. The club has managed its finances well and has a good range of equipment.



Riviera Triathlon Club

The club has recently developed its first business plan. With the support of a dedicated group of people, Riviera Triathlon Club (RTC) is focussed on growing participation in the sport of triathlon by providing leadership, creating an inclusive club environment, to facilitate quality and valuable experiences, raise awareness of the club and the sport and to provide a friendly and safe environment in which to train and compete. The first triathlon in Bairnsdale was run in 1987.



The Riviera Triathlon Club participates in triathlons and multisport events all year around. Membership is open to everyone 5 years onwards and memberships encourage whole family involvement. Currently the club has approximately 140 members. Riviera Triathlon Club has seen rapid growth in the East Gippsland region in recent years helped by the exposure generated by club members competing on the state, national and international stage.

One of the clubs biggest successes has been the establishment of the mini tri series that operates out of the Bairnsdale Recreation and Aquatic Centre over the summer months. Set up in the late 1990s this simple concept has not only grown the club in numbers, it has provided an environment to foster kids coming through the sport. On a weekly basis over the summer months the club see 30 – 40 children taking part in the mini tri series. There are 6 main events and a number of smaller mini tri events. These include Off Road Events, Duathlons, Corporate Tri Event, Fun and Sprint Distance Events.

The club have identified a complete circuit running track and a pavilion upgrade as major projects required at Howitt Park.

Riviera Running Club

During the development of this Master Plan, Howitt Park was identified as a potential site for Park Run which is a weekly 5km run that is free for all participants. Improved pathways at Howitt Park in the future may provide a future location for this very successful style of running event. In addition to this two new user groups have started using Howitt Park. The newly formed East Gippsland Sports Foundation and Riviera Running Club have started to hold events, training sessions and new activities at Howitt Park which are complimentary to the Little Athletics Club which is already undertaken at Howitt Park.

Australian Deer Association - Gippsland

The Deer Association meets bi monthly at Howitt Park and they utilise a small store room within the pavilion. The organisation has 180 members and approximately 20-60 people attend each meeting.

Howitt Park Bowls Club

The Howitt Park Bowls Club has a stable membership of 60 and offers a traditional bowls program of competition as well as social bowls.

The Bowls Club operates under a separate lease and the Committee of Management is not responsible for their facilities. The lease allows space for the future expansion of the club to include another green but this is not required at this stage.



The bowls club facilities include a club house and a natural green playing surface which is in very good condition.

While the club is not formally part of Howitt Park Committee, they operate as part of the park and their member's access some of the reserve area for parking and there is an opportunity for the clubs to work together more in the future.

Governance

Howitt Park is located on Crown land and Council is the appointed manager. In 2012 Council and the Howitt Park Management Committee (Inc.) established a management agreement.

The Committee of Management is made up of representatives of each user group and community members. The Committee's role is to take bookings, increase utilisation, maintain the reserve, resolve management issues and advocate for the Park.

The Park is split into two distinct areas, Howitt Park North and South. The two aerial photographs below outline the areas managed by the Committee of Management.



Howitt Park North



Howitt Park South

The Committee receives an annual maintenance grant from Council. The allocation is for utility service charges and minor maintenance as outlined in the Annual Allocations Policy.

Council mow the grounds and maintain buildings listed in the Management Agreement with the Committee. Council also maintains other areas of Howitt Park that are directly managed by Council including the BMX track and playground. Council provides a high level of support to this reserve as it is located in a high profile site and has a high number of visitors each year.

Currently the Rail Trail Committee of Management, manage the Trail beside the Princes Highway, however Council is working towards taking up responsibility for this land.

Recreation Facilities and Groups in Bairnsdale

There are a range of recreation facilities located in Bairnsdale which provide for a broad range of sports. The maintenance and upgrade costs for these facilities are significant and it will take time to prioritise projects and seek external government funding for Howitt Park in line with the broader needs of the township.

It will be important for the Management Committee to consider the types of user groups that apply to use Howitt Park in future. The facilities are already well utilised and consideration will need to be given on the potential impact on current users, the facilities and their suitability. There may in fact be a more suitable location for any new user groups.

Given the proximity of the reserve to the Mitchell River, groups that require access to the river should be given priority for future access. It may be possible to re-locate other types of users in future to other recreation areas in Bairnsdale.

Site Observations

Howitt Park is located in a very high profile area of Bairnsdale and the visual amenity is of great importance. The Mitchell River adds great aesthetic value to the reserve and allows the water sports good access to the river landing and the backwater boat ramp. Development of facilities and landscaping should consider how the visual amenity of the reserve can be enhanced. The location of the site creates a marketing opportunity for users groups and potential events as passing traffic can view activity and or signage.

Many visitors stop on the North side of Howitt Park to access the toilets and playgrounds while travelling through the local area.

Due to the lay out of the park and the traffic management issues resulting from the busy Princes Highway, many vehicles use the park to cross under the Highway which creates potential for conflict with pedestrians, parked cars and reserve users.

Howitt Park has been used in the past as a former Landfill Site. Detailed information in regards to this use is not available but when projects have been completed in the past, including the recent lighting project, the sub base of the reserve is affected by waste stored below. This has future cost implications for any future projects that require sub surface footings or engineering. The oval surface levels will also be difficult to maintain due to the potential soil movement below.

There are a number of East Gippsland Water assets located within the reserve to manage storm water drainage. Drainage pits are located in key areas which may impact on future facility design or could increase the cost of projects.

Flood Mitigation

The land subject to inundation plan as shown below highlights a significant area of Howitt Park which has potential to flood in high rainfall or moderate or major flood events. Many of the user groups have reported that they have seen flood waters reach up to the pavilion steps.

That being said, other than the general clean up that is required, once the flood water subsides, the impact on the playing surfaces has been minimal.



A project has been identified within this master plan to engage a civil engineer to review the drainage system in place and determine if the facilities can be better protected when flooding occurs. Also there are some minor drainage issues within the park during winter that need to be considered. A feature survey will be required in future.

The location of the electrical switchboard that was installed during the lighting project may be at risk during a flooding event and protection may need to be developed.

Consideration must be given to all future projects at Howitt Park, to ensure that in particular buildings and expensive infrastructure is not impacted upon by flood waters. Effective utilisation of higher areas that are not affected by flood waters is important at Howitt Park.

Identified Projects

A priority ranking scale has been used to prioritise projects throughout the master plan;

Very High	within 12 months
High	1-3 years
Medium	3-10 years
Low	unplanned

The following criteria have been used to develop priority;

- Community Priorities
- Risk
- Usage/Participation
- Availability
- Cost/Funding availability
- Aesthetics/Improve Appearance/Community Pride
- Competition Standard
- Multi Use
- Accessibility
- Sustainability

Within each project area we have used the condition description terminology outlined below to describe the existing facility condition:

1. **Very Good** – Good physical condition, likely to be adequate for the next 10 years
2. **Good** – Acceptable Physical condition, minor defects only, maintenance required
3. **Fair** – Some deterioration, functions adequately
4. **Poor** – Failure/Non Compliance likely in short term, limiting use, substantial work required
5. **Very Poor** – Failed, non-compliant, unsafe, unusable, major work required

It should be noted that the Committee of Management and user groups will identify projects and work towards them as opportunities arise, not being limited to the priority of the project. There is a range of ways to secure funding and support for infrastructure projects and Council is only one of these avenues. It is important that the Committee of Management utilise a range of opportunities to implement the Master Plan projects.

It should also be noted that East Gippsland Shire has a long term financial plan that has been developed considering previously identified infrastructure projects. Projects identified as part of this Master Plan will need to be considered as part of a review of this plan and it may take a number of years for Council to include projects into the forward budget.

Key Recreation Reserve Facilities and Identified Projects

1. Facility: Roderick Pavilion



Existing conditions and utilisation:



The Roderick pavilion was built in 1980 and it caters for all of the user groups at the Park, except for the Bowls and Tennis Clubs. The clubs do an excellent job to share the facility. It is a strong structure in good condition that includes a single set of change rooms, small kitchen and social space that would seat approximately 60 people. Modifications to this facility are required to better cater for the range of users groups and the volumes of people. The Deer Association have access to a small locked room within the pavilion for their equipment. The

veranda area is currently fenced off to create additional secured storage and prevents vandalism to the building. Improvements should be made so that the screening is not required.

The athletics oval has now been developed into the main oval with lighting. While the pavilion is centrally located between the two playing surfaces, there is some distance to access the change rooms, canteen and other support facilities from the main playing area.

We are not proposing to relocate the pavilion due to the cost, but it is something that has been raised by user groups.



Identified Projects:

Pavilion Re-development works would include;

- Additional change rooms.
 - Larger social rooms, installation of screening within the social rooms to create multi use spaces.
 - Additional storage for rowing equipment.
 - Umpire change rooms.
 - First Aid facilities.
 - Kitchen upgrade/bar facilities so that the club can provide better canteen facilities as well as cater for larger events at the pavilion.
-

Groups would like to hold social functions/fundraisers at Howitt Park but they are unable to due to the size of the facility. Given the number of users at the site and the size of the individual user groups, the facility is undersized. The design of the pavilion makes it very difficult for two groups to share the facility at the same time.

Indicative Costs/Priority:

All works would be determined through a detailed design process. Detailed design \$20,000. **(High Priority)**

Total project costs \$500,000- \$1,000,000. **(Medium Priority)**

A staged approach could be delivered as needed to meet budget requirements.

2. Facility: Rowing Club Storage Shed

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The current storage shed is located next to the pavilion, running parallel to the main driveway. The storage area is completely full and the club needs to extend the shed to allow for additional equipment to be stored. This will allow the club to better cater for new members and additional programs.

The dragon boat club also require storage and this could be co-located with the rowing club. It should be noted that there is limited opportunity to increase the footprint of both facilities due to the driveway, parking and embankment. The pavilion cannot be relocated to a lower level due to the potential flooding issues. The Storage Shed is situated in a high profile location of the park and it is important that future expansions are visually appropriate.



The rowing club have also indicated that a fenced off secure storage area located alongside the river would be beneficial when major events are being held. This could be provided through removable fencing.

The master plan has also identified a future location for a rowing memorial to be relocated to Howitt Park.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

The short term option is to extend the existing storage facility by adding floor space through a shed extension. There are two options for extending the shed. The club have investigated increasing towards the driveway which would mean that the driveway will need to be re-aligned. The preferred option is to extend the shed towards the embankment and investigation works have commenced.

Shed extension and driveway works \$10,000- \$20,000. **(High Priority)**

A third option is to consider the additional storage in line with the pavilion upgrade to accommodate storage on a lower level and the construction of the social space on a second level. Costs included with pavilion project but storage improvements are needed in the short term.

Also, to create a fenced off secure area on river level to be used at major events. Investigate temporary fence options for this purpose. Estimated Cost \$3,000. **(High Priority)**



Side of new rowing shed where extension could be done and no space available in shed

3. Facility: Additional Storage for Dragon Boats

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The Dragons Abreast Gippsland Waratahs is a relatively new user group and currently they store their equipment at private houses. The dragon boats are approximately 13 metres in length and 1 metre wide which makes storage a challenge and they are moved using a trailer. The members access the main boat ramp at Howitt Park to commence paddling. It is not advised to build any further standalone sheds at Howitt Park.

Identified Projects:

The first proposal being considered is a further extension to the new storage shed that has been built at Howitt Park. Advice is being sought as to whether this is possible and the traffic management works will have to consider how the dragon boats will be moved around from the shed to the boat ramp. Alternatively storage could be provided through the rowing storage proposals.

Indicative Costs/Priority: Design and cost to be determined. **(High Priority)**

4. Facility: Traffic Management

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The biggest challenge for Howitt Park and the surrounding residential areas is the Princes Highway. Turning in and out of the Park and local streets can be difficult due to the traffic volumes on the Highway. Many vehicles cross under the bridge to move onto the side of the Highway they need. This means that cars travel around the Park at speed. A high risk area has been identified on the driveway adjacent to the Pavilion and the Rowing Club shed. Extensions to these buildings will require a driveway realignment.

Informal parking occurs on the river's edge and on the bottom playing surface which does cause some damage but can be managed appropriately.

The driveway is a combination of gravel and asphalt in good to fair condition. Ongoing maintenance is a challenge.

Most of the parking on the sports ground side of the reserve is informal on grass around key activity areas. Users report that parking is not an issue except around the pavilion when facilities are blocked off.



Additional gravel is required in front of the new shed to assist with vehicle movements in this area.

During the development of the Master Plan a traffic management consultant was engaged to review the issues identified and provide a series of recommendations for the Park. Identified projects include:

- Install bollards around the buildings to prevent vehicles accessing the playing surfaces.
- Consider how the driveway at the rear of the new shed can be made safer. Also, how to create access and additional parking areas for the tennis and bowls club from McEacharn Street.
- Driveway realignment (around buildings and the proposed rowing club extension).
- Maintain Emergency Vehicle Access to playing surface and buildings.
- Linemarking.
- Matching of kerb and pavement surfaces throughout the park.
- Development of additional formal parking areas in designated areas of park.
- Maintenance of existing gravel surfaces.
- Directional / Speed restriction signage.
- Additional gravel in front of new shed.
- Pathway modifications (discussed in the next section).



Indicative Costs/Priority:

A range of recommendations have been made. Signage could be developed over time. Other major capital works/ maintenance will need to be completed by Council as the resources are available. **(Medium Priority)**



5. Facility: Pathways/Pedestrian Access

Existing conditions and utilisation:

There are existing concrete footpaths which link the sports ground to the residential streets, within the park in several locations and along the roadsides as footpaths. These are all in good to very good condition. Also, the Rail Trail runs along the edge of Howitt Park, along the Princes Highway, which is not currently managed by the HP Committee of Management. The Rail Trail is also duplicated by a footpath adjacent to it along the highway. The traffic management consultant has re-designed this area to allow for future expansion of the buildings, formalised parking and a single pathway.

The current and future users of the park would like to complete a trail around the Park to improve access and create a fitness/running trail with measurements that can be used by groups for running events. This has been proposed within the master plan and in the traffic management study, using some of the existing path network as well as proposing new sections to develop the circuit.

The user groups would also like the future design works to consider how the circuit pathway could be developed to cater for cycling, duathlon or triathlon events. This would require a pathway width of at least 4 metres which is wider than the standard shared pathway.



Concrete pathway



Old railway bridge

The old railway bridge which crosses the Mitchell River has been identified as something that should be removed as part of this consultation. However investigations have shown mixed opinions on the bridge and it may also be retained for bicycle access in future.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

Complete the construction of a concrete circuit track of park/pathways and install markers/signage. Re-instate areas where pathways are re-located.

Some sections would require significant earthworks and would be more expensive. An indicative cost for pathway construction of around 800 lineal metres approximately \$100,000 which could be implemented in a staged approach. An increase in pathway width to accommodate cycling would require additional earthworks and a higher lineal metre rate.

Given the size and complexity of this project more detailed design work and further investigation will need to be undertaken. **(High Priority)**

6. Facility: Coaches/Timing Boxes

Existing conditions and utilisation:

Currently there are no coaching boxes, timing shelters or other types of facilities provided for soccer or Little Athletics. It is very important to provide shelter for volunteers and portable shade structures are difficult to manage.

Identified Projects:

Both clubs would like to design compliant shelters that could be used for soccer and for the timing officials at Little Athletics. They will probably need to be portable or if they were permanent, consultation will be required to find the best location which will be a challenge.

Indicative Costs/Priority:

Design and construct shelters \$5,000 - \$20,000 depending on design/number etc. **(Medium Priority)**

7. Facility: Public Toilets

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The main public toilets for the Sports Ground are located on the opposite side to the pavilion, adjacent to the Tennis courts. The toilets are kept locked but are opened as required for competition days. The user groups have said that the number of toilets is adequate and the facilities are in Fair condition.

Additional public toilets are provided at the main park area in Howitt Park which are managed by Council.



Main public toilets near tennis courts

Identified Projects:

It was identified in the Risk Management report and in our inspection that building maintenance is required to improve safety of the toilets.

Indicative Costs/Priority:

Repairs works \$20,000. **(High Priority)**

8. Facility: Playing Surface

Existing conditions and utilisation:

A major lighting project of the main (athletics oval) was completed in 2013 and now the ground has match level lighting.



This has now become the main oval for soccer. As a result of this project, the Little Athletics infrastructure high jump, long jump, shot put and discus have all been relocated to new areas. The Risk Management Report made some recommendations in regards to the playing surfaces. These have been implemented to achieve the required pitch sizes and compliance. The surface quality is in good condition for soccer in most areas, except where the recent works have been undertaken. Levelling of the main oval is required and some surface works. Given that the Park is located on an ex land fill site, the quality and level of the playing surface at Howitt Park is likely to be an ongoing challenge.

There is no irrigation on site which would help improve the surface, but a sub-surface irrigation system is not appropriate for this site. The type of grass on the athletics track is not ideal and causes some trip hazards. Grass species should be reviewed.



Main Oval

Identified Projects:

Recommendations include a playing surface upgrade on main oval including the quality of turf to better suit the athletics track.

- Maintain boundaries of soccer pitches to ensure compliance.
- The wire fencing around the second playing surface needs to be routinely repaired/upgraded.
- Retain access to Little Athletic field facilities – relocate discus as deemed appropriate.

Oval 2 is in good condition and requires ongoing maintenance to ensure a suitable playing surface. **(Medium Priority)**

Oval 1 surface upgrade and levelling which is likely to be an ongoing challenge \$50,000 **(High Priority)**

Fence repairs as required. **(Medium Priority)**



9. Facility: Increase External Power Outlets/Power to Shed

Existing conditions and utilisation:

A new storage shed has been installed in 2014 and it is shared by the user groups. Electrical cable was allowed for as part of the major lighting project and some additional work is required to connect the shed and make it useable. The market and other groups would like access to external power if possible.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

Connect shed to power source. Cost \$2,000. **(Low Priority)**

Investigate options for increasing power outlets throughout the reserve (users currently provide generators). Investigation cost only; it may not be practical due to the flooding risk. **(Low Priority)**

Consider how the new switchboard, which is located between the oval and shed can be protected in a flooding event. Cost to be determined. **(High Priority)**

10. Facility: Increase Directional/Safety Signage

Existing conditions and utilisation: The risk management report identified that there was a need to increase the amount of signage in regards to the risks i.e. river as well as general direction signage. A signage theme should be developed and check with Council insurers to ensure all required signage is provided. There is also a need to upgrade promotional/park signage at the main entrance.

Identified Projects:

- Identify all signage requirements.
- Purchase all required signage, risk management signs to be prioritised first.

Indicative Costs/Priority:

Signage – purchase as budget allows. **(High – Medium Priority)**

11. Facility: River Access

Existing conditions and utilisation: The rowing club have a rowing launch which is located directly adjacent to the second playing surface at the river edge. A concrete pathway allows access down to river level but the pathway does not connect to the Park pathway. This would improve access.

The rowing club would like to increase the size of the river landing area to better accommodate the increasing number of river users. However, further investigation would be required to determine the feasibility and design for any future extensions. The area experiences high volumes of water flow during flooding events and the infrastructure would need to be appropriate.

The boat ramp located near the BMX track on the other side of the Park on the Mitchell River Backwater is accessed by the dragon boats and for rowing safety boats etc. Further improvements are required to this boat ramp to improve accessibility.

Further investigation should be undertaken in consultation with the users to identify the issues which include vandalism, fishing and mooring of boats in the boat ramp area.

There has been a recent clean-up of the river bank to improve appearance and viewing of the river. Sight lines in the Howitt Park area are important for the rowing club and dragon boats.



Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

Connect pathways to the rowing launch. Cost \$3,000. **(Medium priority)**

Complete repairs to existing launch area where wash outs are occurring. Consider increasing the size of the river launch for increased use after further investigation. **(Low Priority)**

Boat ramp Improvements – further investigation required to improve access and reduce conflict for Dragon Boat members (Under Councils Management). **(Medium Priority)**

Ongoing weed removal and vegetation management on the river bank – ongoing maintenance cost. **(Very High Priority)**

Install seating along river bank in key areas for spectators. Seating \$5,000. **(Low Priority)**



Rowing launch



Weeds that need spraying

12. Facility: Flood Mitigation/Drainage

Existing conditions and utilisation:

As discussed earlier in the report, flooding of the Mitchell River will be an ongoing concern for Council and the users of the reserve. When Howitt Park floods, there is damage to the reserve and as a result, impacts upon what facilities can be planned in the flood zone. A feature survey and drainage design is required to identify levels and the drainage system in place.

Identified Projects:

All facility improvements need to be considered with flood mitigation in mind.

A review needs to be undertaken of all drainage for the Park. An improved design may be required and works are required in the market area as some areas are prone to water damage which then in turn impacts on access/market sites. This work would be undertaken by Council and other relevant authorities.

Indicative Costs/Priority:

Drainage review/Design/Feature Survey – \$20,000. **(Medium Priority)**

Minor drainage improvements to market area \$2,000. **(Very High Priority)**

Drainage works as recommended in design – cost to be determined. **(Medium Priority)**

13. Facility: Storage for Rotary Trailer

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The storage on the site has been increased significantly by the installation of the new shed. Since the shed has been constructed, rotary have identified the need for access to a storage shed to store their trailer and market equipment. There is no vacant storage presently but if one of the users required less space in the new shed, this could be an option.



Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

The equipment could be stored with any rowing club/dragon boat storage area but space would be a premium. No clear option has been identified – to be considered with other proposals/facilities or perhaps the consideration of another site maybe more appropriate. **(Low Priority)**

14. Facility: Playground's

Existing conditions and utilisation:

There is a small playground located adjacent to the tennis courts. On the other side of the Highway, there is a broad range of playground equipment for all ages and a BMX track.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

Council should undertake the required playground inspections and upgraded equipment to comply as required. Maintenance and upgrade cost to be managed by Council. **(High Priority)**



15. Facility: Shade Structures/Seating

Existing conditions and utilisation:

On the sportsground side of Howitt Park there is very limited seating around the playing surfaces. It would be good for spectators to have seating in areas where it is safe (away from play and vehicles). There are a limited number of shade trees but a tree planting program should be developed to improve the natural shade available.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

Purchase and install additional seating on concrete pads in locations where shade is available (if possible). \$500 per seat approx. **(Medium Priority)**

Develop a tree planting program and plant some mature trees to increase the shade available and establish the trees with watering and care. Use a council preferred planting guide. Planning and cost of planting approx. \$300 per tree. **(Medium Priority)**

16. Facility: Tennis Facilities

Existing conditions and utilisation:

The two court synthetic grass tennis courts and club house were upgraded in 2009 after receiving a SRV grant. The facilities are in Good Condition.

Identified Projects and Indicative Costs/Priority:

The tennis club are very happy with the facilities provided and have not identified any projects for the Master Plan. Ongoing maintenance work/cost. **(Medium Priority)**



Funding Models

A Master Plan identifies a broad range of projects that will be considered over the future 10 year period. The document is a tool that can be used by the Committee of Management as the planning framework. The Committee can implement projects as the resources and detailed investigative work become available.

The Committee of Management and User groups will need to consider a range of funding models to implement the projects as East Gippsland Shire will not always be the funding provider. Funding is a critical component of all infrastructure planning and development. Funding models may include:

Venue/User Group Funding – Venue/User Groups are normally required to contribute to project funding. Contribution rates can vary depending on project and conditions of grant(s) being sourced. Additionally, the Committee of Management or groups may choose to fund the projects in entirety.

Other Government (i.e. Federal, State) – The primary source of support funding for Sporting Infrastructure Development is from the Department of Health and Human Services. Other opportunistic funding opportunities may become available over time i.e. Flood relief funding.

The Committee may also access in kind support through voluntary or discounted labour or donations by **Local business or Contractors**.

There are also a range of **Philanthropic Organisations** that offer small funding programs for specific types of projects.

Project Summary

This Master Plan has been developed following extensive consultation with the Committee of Management and Howitt Park User Groups. The Master Plan provides a framework to guide planning over the coming 10 years and to also strengthen the links between Council and the community. Hands on Community Solutions identified the following projects as part of the Master Planning Process;

PROJECT	APPROXIMATE COST/COST RANGE
1. Pavilion	
- Detailed design (High Priority)	\$20,000
- Total Project Cost (Medium Priority)	\$500,000 - \$1,000,000
2. Rowing Club Storage Shed	
- Shed extension and driveway works (High Priority)	\$10,000 - \$20,000
- Additional Storage with pavilion works	Included with pavilion project
- Additional fenced off storage area for events (High Priority)	\$3,000
3. Additional Storage for Dragon Boats (High Priority)	To be determined
4. Traffic Management	
- Refer to Traffic Management Plan and recommendations	To be determined

(Medium Priority)	
5. Pathways/Pedestrian Access	
- Construct missing/new sections of concrete pathway to develop circuit track (High Priority)	\$100,000
6. Coaches/Timing Boxes	
- Design and construct shelters (Medium Priority)	\$5,000 - \$20,000
7. Repair Public Toilets – adjacent to tennis courts	
- Repair Works (High priority)	\$20,000
8. Playing Surface	
- Oval 1 surface upgrade (High priority)	\$50,000
- Oval 2 Maintenance (Medium priority)	Maintenance cost
- Fence repairs as needed (Medium priority)	Maintenance cost
9. Increase External Power Outlets/Power To Shed	
- Connect power to shed – as needed (Low Priority)	\$2,000
- Investigate options for increasing power outlets throughout the reserve as needed (Low Priority)	NA
- Protect switchboard from flooding events (High Priority)	To be determined
10. Increase Directional/Safety Signage	
- Signage – purchase as budget allows (High – Medium Priority)	NA
11. River Access	
- Connect pathways to the rowing launch (Medium priority)	\$3,000
- Re-design and increase the size of the river launch for increased use after investigation (Low Priority)	To be costed at design stage
- Boat Ramp Improvements (Medium Priority)	Further Investigation Required
- Vegetation Management (Very High Priority)	Ongoing maintenance costs
- Seating (Low Priority)	\$5,000
12. Flood Mitigation/Drainage	
- Drainage review/Design/Feature Survey (Medium Priority)	\$20,000
- Minor drainage improvements to market area (Very High Priority)	\$2,000
- Other drainage works as recommended in design (Medium Priority)	Cost to be determined
13. Storage for Rotary Trailer	
- Storage options (Low priority)	NA
14. Playground's	
- Maintenance and upgrade (High Priority)	Managed by Council
15. Shade Structures/Seating	
- Seating (Medium Priority)	\$500 per seat
- Tree planting (Medium Priority)	\$300 per tree
16. Tennis Facilities Ongoing Maintenance	
- Ongoing Maintenance (Medium Priority)	Ongoing maintenance costs

Recommendations

The final recommendations for the Howitt Park Master Plan are;

- The Committee and user groups should undertake ongoing maintenance work to ensure that the facilities are safe and functional until upgrade works can be undertaken.
- The Committee of Management with support from the user groups should work together to bring about projects that will benefit everyone at the reserve.
- Detailed planning, design, approvals, construction and implementation of priorities should be undertaken in a planned and professional manner to further consider the projects identified in the Master Plan.
- Council should consider the projects identified in the Master Plan in line with the development of future long term financial plans and support external funding applications where the opportunities arise.
- The Howitt Park Reserve Master Plan should be reviewed in five years and evaluated against achievement of key projects identified within the plan.

Disclaimer of Liability

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the Howitt Park Committee of Management, user groups and East Gippsland Shire Council. All recommendations by Hands on Community Solutions are based on information provided by or on behalf of the management committee, user groups and Council and we have relied upon such information being correct at the time this report has been prepared.

Readers should note this report might include implicit projections about the future which, by their nature, are uncertain and cannot be relied upon. They are dependent on potential events or technical assessments, which have not yet occurred.

References

The following references have been used in the development of this report:

- Government Website's – Planning scheme data and maps, grant information
 - East Gippsland Shire Council – website
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics – population data
 - Recreation studies and strategies as identified in the document
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HOWITT PARK LANDSCAPE PLAN

