

3.11 TARAWERA PARK

3.11.1 DESCRIPTION

Tarawera Park is the second largest recreational Reserve within the Kawerau boundary. It has been developed as the main rugby and soccer ground with four full sized fields permanently marked.

Tarawera Park is located off Cobham Drive, southeast of the town centre. Private residential housing borders the western boundary with the Tarawera River bounding the east. The Kawerau Golf and Squash Club lie to the south of the Park and the northern boundary runs adjacent to the Lyn Hartley Reserve.

Main vehicular access is off Cobham Drive although Council maintenance vehicles may enter the Reserve from locked gates off River Road and the Lyn Hartley Reserve. Pedestrian access is available through all vehicle access routes, the golf course at the southern end and the Cobham Drive flats at the south west corner of the Park. Pedestrian access through all gates is unrestricted. Vehicle access through Cobham Drive is available at times when the Park is in use.

The Park topography is largely flat and it is on these areas that sports field surfaces have been established. The Reserve perimeter adjoining the golf course and Cobham Drive residential properties rises up a natural embankment providing spectacular viewing and seating. The Tarawera River embankment on the eastern boundary forms part of the Tarawera River track. The Park's northern boundary comprises the overflow stream from the nearby town water supply pumphouse and the Hilldale Subdivision area.

All soils in the area are of a very recent origin and mainly associated with eruptions from the Okataina Caldera. Most are rhyolitic pumice with the exception of the last ash shower which was alkaline basaltic scoria from the Tarawera eruption.

The rhyolitic subsoils are freely drained but of only moderate to low fertility; the basaltic scoria, while of much higher potential fertility, has yet to break down to form real soil. The dark colour of the scoria combined with the high sunlight levels of the

region cause natural aridity, which can create difficulties in establishing tree species and maintaining a quality turf cover on playing surfaces. The river bank soils are recently water-sorted volcanic sand and gravels. There has been substantial contouring and importation of soil with the development of the playing fields. These activities have altered the soil profile and structure in this area.

The majority of Tarawera Park has been sown in turf grass species suitable for playing fields. This expanse of open mown space is complemented by extensive tree and shrub plantings, which contribute largely to the park's attractive setting.

The river bank area is planted with a range of predominantly exotic trees which spill over into the park. The Tarawera River walking track traverses the riverside.

The existing plant communities including stands of Kanuka have been developed and modified into low maintenance woodlands to form an attractive recreational backdrop to the Park. Recent emphasis has been on the introduction of native species into this area but this has not been to the exclusion of some new exotic plantings which complement established trees.

There is an avenue of large Plane trees on either side of the main access route. The Reserve is further complemented by a number of oak and other shade trees planted along the embankment for the purpose of spectator comfort. Other established plantings screen the perimeters of the Park from Cobham Drive, Holland Crescent and the golf club.

The sporting facilities and ancillary buildings situated on Tarawera Park are described below.

Kawerau Sports Club Incorporated (Formerly Kawerau United Rugby Club) Clubrooms The clubroom has a floor area of approximately 344 square metres and is centrally located on the Park. Officially opened on 27 March 1976, the complex has a hall large enough to cater for 200 people. In 1988 a new bar, coolroom and rumpus room were added.

In 2011, ownership of the building was vested in Council and funding secured to upgrade it. The upgraded building was leased to the Kawerau Sports Club in 2012 for use as its main clubrooms.

Onepu Rugby Football Club Clubrooms The neighbouring Onepu clubrooms complex was built in 1984. With a floor area of 450 square metres, the building offers similar facilities, yet has the addition of a gas equipped kitchen.

Amenities Building Council owns a building of 230m² comprising four changing rooms, two shower blocks, referees facilities and storage areas. The building is available for hire to users of the sports fields.

Public Conveniences An old concrete toilet block is situated to the south side of the Kawerau Rugby Sports and Cultural Club building. These facilities are prone to vandalism and are kept locked unless use is specifically requested by Park users.

The toilet block is cleaned by Council staff before being opened for public use. Both clubrooms and the amenity block have toilet facilities however these are not always available to the general public.

Sports Fields Three full sized marked rugby fields and one full sized marked soccer field occupy the southern half of Tarawera Park and Council is responsible for general ground maintenance. Three of the four rugby fields have six floodlights each. The northern half of Tarawera Park has space for up to four hockey or soccer fields, which are marked on an as-required basis.

3.11.2 HISTORY

Following the 1886 eruption of Mount Tarawera the course of the Tarawera River altered. This formed the relatively flat areas of what is now known as Tarawera Park and adjoining Ward Street Reserve. From 1955, when Kawerau residents expressed their need for recreational facilities, these flat areas were identified as an ideal site for rugby fields.

Between 1955 And 1960, two rugby grounds were developed on Tarawera Park and the old Borough Council office/library building was relocated from Onslow Street for use as changing rooms and ablution facilities. The Kawerau United Rugby

Club building was opened in 1976. The original building continued to be used as changing rooms until it was eventually demolished in 1981 after being destroyed by vandals.

Further upgrading of the park during the 1970s and 80s resulted in extensive fencing, tree planting and the sealing of the access road and parking areas. Two more rugby fields and four junior soccer fields were also established. The soccer fields were also used for hockey. Earthworks were undertaken to remove several 'river peninsulas' which extended out from the Cobham drive foothills onto the now flat playing surfaces. Also built during this period was the amenity block between the two clubrooms. It was designed to allow for the possible future addition of a grandstand on top.

By 1984, the size of the Onepu Club had outgrown its clubrooms on the Park. A more modern building was erected and the old facilities demolished.

Use of the sports fields reduced in the early 2000's and by 2010, clubs were no longer operating from the clubroom buildings. In 2011 a decision was made to relocate rugby and soccer back to Tarawera Park. As well as an extensive upgrade of the former United Rugby Club building, the Onepu Building also underwent some refurbishment. In 2012 Tarawera Park became the premier sports field for rugby and soccer in the District.

3.11.3 STATUS

Tarawera Park is vested in, and administered by, the Kawerau District Council. The park is a Recreation Reserve as defined by the Reserves Act 1977. The legal description is:

Allotment 505, Matata Parish, Block XIII, Rangitaiki Upper Survey District.

Tarawera Park is approximately 15.3325 hectares in size.

Tarawera Park is zoned Reserve under the Kawerau District Council District Plan.

3.11.4 POLICIES

Landscape Character

1. The relaxed and informal nature of the Park shall be retained.
2. Specimen trees on the Park shall be maintained.
3. Ground maintenance shall be to a standard appropriate to the various recreational uses of the Park.

Vegetation

1. The semi-wilderness character of the river embankment shall be maintained.
2. Any further planting on the river embankment shall be with tree and shrub species complementary to the character of the Park.
3. The integrity of all native species shall be preserved.
4. Prior to removal of any vegetation, its historic, ecological and aesthetic merit must be assessed against the goal of removal.
5. Pest plants shall be controlled and where possible eliminated from the Park.
6. Sound horticultural techniques shall be applied in the management of the Park's vegetation and turf.

Access/Parking

1. Tarawera Park, other than marked playing areas, is a designated dog exercise area.
2. Existing pedestrian access to Tarawera Park shall be maintained.
3. The sealed vehicle access way through Tarawera Park shall be maintained.
4. The sealed parking area with its surrounding fence shall be maintained.
5. Roads and access ways shall not detract from the Reserve's natural qualities or its potential for recreational use.
6. The track along the Tarawera River from the Kawerau Golf Course to the Waterwheel Heritage Park shall be maintained in a semi-wilderness state for walking access.