

Aspiring Leaders Forum
Wellington, 21st - 24th August 2025

The 19th annual Aspiring Leaders' Forum took place in Wellington from Thursday, 21st August through to Sunday, 24th August 2025. This four-day event brought together over 100 young leaders from across Aotearoa New Zealand to explore leadership grounded in faith, values, and servant leadership.

When I first heard about the Forum from Mayor Andy Watson, I was unfamiliar and honestly quite clueless about what to expect. At the time, I was fully immersed in preparations for the Pasifika Festival. Mayor Watson's phone call was both surprising and exciting, followed by an encouraging email that made me pause and reflect. After looking into the Forum, I felt a spark of curiosity and thought, "Why not?" To be nominated was a profound privilege. The council's generous sponsorship and support to cover all costs made this opportunity possible, for which I am deeply grateful.

The first day began with a welcome meeting at Rydges Hotel where we were introduced to the Forum's purpose and met fellow delegates. We were assigned to small groups, and then, around midday, we walked to Parliament House. The day started with a solemn karakia setting a thoughtful tone. Hearing inspiring Members of Parliament speak about their leadership journeys was humbling. Paulo Garcia, Oriini Kaipara, and Cushla Tangaere-Manuel each offered unique insights. Cushla's message struck a chord deeply: "True leaders realise that they are actually servants." Her words reminded me that authentic leadership requires humility and staying true to oneself amidst pressures. The MPs shared their hopes and challenges, painting a vivid picture of leadership as service, resilience, and connection to community.

Following lunch, we had intimate, face-to-face discussions with an MP, Francisco Hernandez from the Green Party. His openness about balancing personal life with public service gave me a deeper, more human view of politics. These conversations sowed seeds of inspiration and motivated me to think beyond politics into the heart of leadership.

Throughout the day, I connected with driven, hopeful individuals, each carrying a story and vision for a better future. Seeing our MP Suze Redmayne was also highlighted, even though our busy schedules prevented a proper conversation.



The second day was filled with more powerful storytelling. Guests like Rob Cromb shared moving reflections on faith's role in overcoming hardship, while Jenny Horst's youth mentoring work sparked hope. Breakout seminars with leaders like Cameron Adams challenged us intellectually and emotionally. Our group discussions were deeply personal, allowing us to share our values, struggles, and visions for making a difference in our communities.

The day shifted gears with the sports tournament at Akua Tangi Sports Centre. It was a welcome release of laughter, friendly competition, and new friendships were formed on the courts. That evening, networking at the hotel bar encouraged rich conversations. I bonded with fellow young leaders, including two teenagers, one focused on environmental and Māori healthcare issues and another a fellow Youth MP from Hamilton. These exchanges reaffirmed that despite varied paths, we shared a common dedication to leadership and service.

Each day of the Forum included dedicated group time, where all delegates took turns sharing their personal stories and leadership journeys. I was placed in Group 7, which interestingly also had exactly seven members.

In all honesty, I felt a degree of pressure as I observed that many in the group were already engaged in university studies, owned businesses, or were pursuing impressive career paths in finance and other fields. However, as I spent more time with these peers, young and older alike I came to realize that each person's unique experiences had shaped them into the leaders they are today. It became clear that despite our different backgrounds, we were united by the same fundamental questions: "Why am I here? What am I hoping to take away from this experience?"

When it was my turn to share my own story, it stirred an emotional roller coaster within me. Revealing my journey, including the struggles and triumphs, was both challenging and freeing. The vulnerability I felt strengthened the bonds with my group and deepened my understanding in the power of authentic storytelling. This exchange of personal experiences created a space of empathy and encouragement, inspiring me to embrace my own leadership journey with renewed courage.

The time spent with my group proved to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the Forum. Every individual brought invaluable wisdom from their personal journeys, and as our conversations deepened, I found myself increasingly inspired. The openness, support, and shared reflections fostered a strong sense of connection and growth that I will carry forward in my own leadership path.



Day three was an exciting experience. We donned gloves and weatherproof gear for community service, planting native flora and battling invasive weeds near Kumutoto Awa. Being hands-on in restoring the environment gave personal weight to leadership through action.

Later, I chose to attend a seminar by William Pike, whose inspiring journey overcoming a physical disability to impact thousands of young New Zealanders deeply moved me. The William Pike Challenge embodies courage, perseverance, and the power of belief.

That evening, we celebrated with a traditional barn dance held at a local hall, preceded by a community-prepared dinner. It was a joyful opportunity to unwind and celebrate the bonds formed. Bonds forged over shared stories and laughter spilled late into the evening. Back at the resort, continued conversations and reflections with fellow delegates deepened friendships. I particularly related to a youth council chair from Manawatū/Palmerston North, as we shared our regional leadership experiences. This reinforced my understanding that while our contexts differ, our goals of serving rangatahi unite us.

On the last day, Jim Veitch, the founder of the Forum, shared his vision and inspired us to carry forward the legacy of servant leadership. The closing Pōrōrāki was heartfelt, filled with gratitude and renewed commitment. Leaving Wellington, I felt transformed, charged with fresh purpose, surrounded by a network of remarkable young leaders, and motivated to continue growing and serving my community.

I owe my deepest thanks to Mayor Andy Watson for his nomination and support, as well as to Beth Watson, Bruce & Carol Gordon, Councillor Gill Duncan, Councillor Jeff Wong, and John & Angela Turkington, whose generosity helped make this journey possible. This opportunity has led me in my commitments to lead with humility, faith, and resilience.

The Aspiring Leaders' Forum was more than an event; it was a life-affirming, inspiring experience that challenged, encouraged, and equipped me to be a servant leader for the near and far future, wherever that may take place.





Taihape Memorial Park Grandstand

RESTORATION PROJECT

CLIENT

Taihape Grandstand Restoration Committee

October 2025

TAIHAPE GRANDSTAND BACKGROUND

The Taihape Grandstand, constructed in 1924, is truly an excellent example of a building type that has almost completely disappeared in New Zealand. It is an important Taihape Icon. Having spent much time studying and drawing this building our team have become greatly impressed by the elegance and vigour of the original design.

For a hundred years the Grandstand has been home base to two local Taihape Rugby Clubs - Huia Rugby Club, founded in 1897 and Utiku Old Boys Rugby Club, founded in 1949. In January 2023 the building's classification as a Grade 2 Heritage Building was announced. According to Heritage NZ records, the building was designed by architect Oscar Albert Jorgensen and is considered to be one of the few remaining wooden structures of its type in rural New Zealand.

Restoration of this building is required to meet the requirements of the Building Act and, to meet community needs, provide a refit of the interior to accommodate two possibly three rugby changing rooms complete with shower and toilet facilities, storage areas, a referee's room, and separate toilets accessed from outside to serve the nearby playground.

Timber framed buildings perform fairly well in earthquake conditions and the Taihape Grandstand has survived relatively unscathed, in a region that has many earthquakes, for more than a century. However in recent years it has fallen into neglect partly because of the uncertainty of its seismic safety. A considered and gentle-handed method of seismic strengthening and restoration that respects the heritage nature of the building is proposed to meet or exceed the minimum seismic requirements of the Building Code such that it can again be legitimately and safely used for its intended purpose. This method works with the original design of the timber framed building and has minimum impact on its historic details.



Taihape, New Zealand



Taihape Town



Current View of the Grandstand from the Field

NEED FOR NEW FACILITIES

Not only is the Taihape Grandstand an important building from an architectural and historical standpoint, but it also marks the hub of a thriving local and regional sports culture. In particular the sport of Rugby takes the helm at Memorial Park. Current users include three local mens and one local womens teams, Taihape Junior Rugby involves over 150 kids and up to 15 teams play Summer Touch here.

While it is the exterior of the building and the spectator seating area which holds most of the architectural heritage, the interior of the building is needed to provide changing rooms and storage for the expanding sports demands. The interior layout of changing rooms and showers although not original was carried out in the 1960's, decades after the original construction, and now the changing rooms and showers are decrepit. In fact the showers are no longer operational. It is proposed to completely remove the interior layout back to reveal the original building fabric, and replace with up to date facilities.



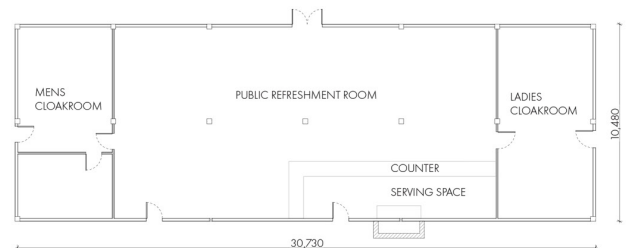
Grandstand view from the park



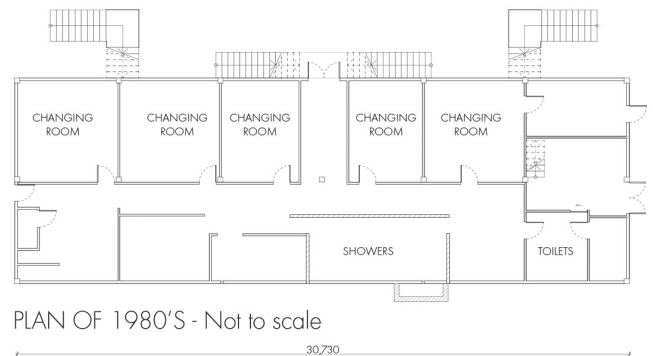
Grandstand view from Kokako street



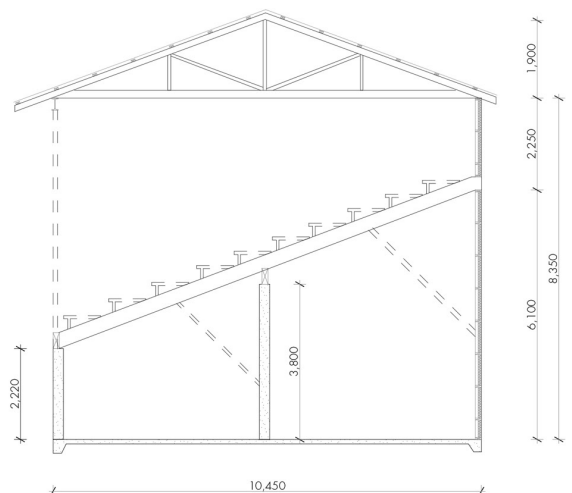
Grandstand from park



PLAN OF 1923 - Not to scale



PLAN OF 1980'S - Not to scale



GENERAL SECTION - Not to scale

CURRENT CONDITION



Grandstand view from the park



Grandstand Interior



Condition of roof above seating



Grandstand Interior



Damaged waterproofing under seating



Typical existing window jammed in closed position



Grandstand Exterior Staircase



Existing open tread stair

THE PROPOSED RESTORATION PROJECT

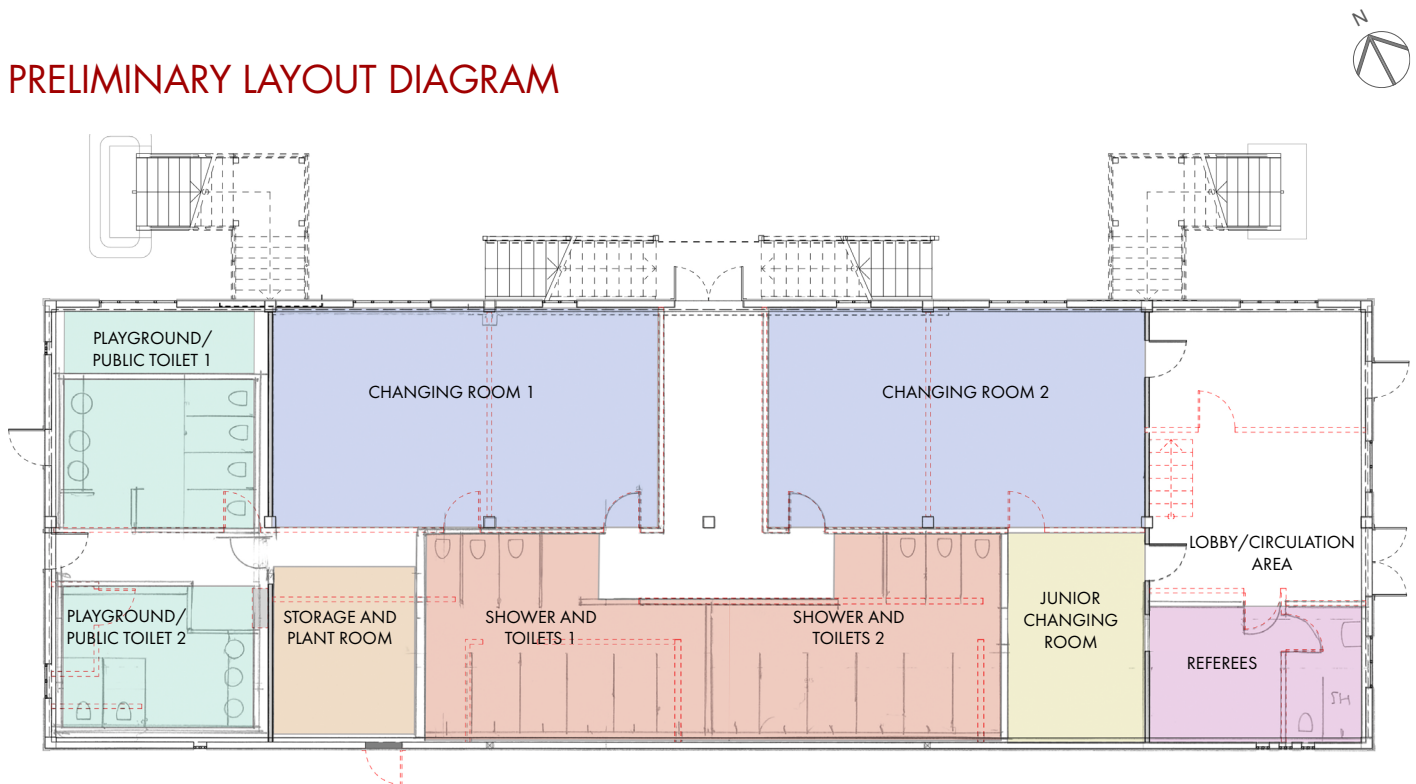
REINSTATEMENT

- Seismic strengthening of the existing structure
- Repair/replacement /strengthening of existing building fabric where necessary
- Re-roofing
- New roof rainwater and storm water drainage system
- Replacement or modification of stairs to meet current code requirements
- Remediation at the base of the building to prevent damp penetration
- Code compliance, as nearly as is reasonably practicable, with provisions that relate to means of escape from fire
- Code compliance, as nearly as is reasonably practicable, with provisions that relate to access and facilities for persons with disabilities

NEW FACILITIES

- Fit-out for two or possibly three Rugby changing rooms
- New toilets and showers for the changing rooms
- Referee's room with adjacent toilet and shower
- Junior Rugby storage and changing space
- Lockable dry storage
- Playground toilets separately accessed from outside
- New plumbing and wastewater drainage installation

PRELIMINARY LAYOUT DIAGRAM



THE TEAM

COPELAND ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS

CAA is an award-winning architectural practice founded in 1997. They specialize in projects with a community focus and have significant experience working with existing buildings. As well as involvement with the Taihape Grandstand project, they have recently successfully completed the Nga Awa Amenity Building at Taihape Memorial Park.

COMPUSOFT ENGINEERING LTD

Compusoft Engineering specialises in seismic analysis and retrofit solutions for new and existing structures under seismic and post-earthquake conditions using specialist knowledge, experience and advanced structural analysis techniques.

SAGE FIRE DESIGN

Sage Fire Design is a professional and practical fire engineer with particular experience of working with existing buildings for community groups.

BQH Quantity Surveyors

BQH are consulting quantity surveyors and construction economics experts with a regional portfolio and collaborative team approach.



CONTACT

Copeland Associates Architects

PO Box 9207 Newmarket
Level One, 8 Railway Street,
Newmarket Auckland 1023, NZ

+64 9 522 5259

barry@copelandassociates.co.nz

www.caa.co.nz

Response to Consultant Report – Rangitikei Netball Courts

Firstly, we would like to sincerely thank Rangitikei District Council for commissioning this report and for the continued support shown toward sport and community facilities within our district. We acknowledge the work undertaken and the value of seeking expert advice.

The consulting company, Thrive Spaces and Places, appears to have relied on national participation data rather than district-specific analysis. While national trends are informative, they do not reflect the unique dynamics of rural communities such as ours. We are unsure of the cost of this consultation but had expected a more detailed review of local climate conditions, facility suitability, and usage patterns.

To support evidence-based decision making, we are happy to provide additional local data, including participation statistics, programme uptake and testimonies from local schools and whānau. We will also supply the *Voice of the Tamariki* survey conducted by Sport Whanganui, which we believe presents far more relevant and accurate insights than nationwide surveys. The findings clearly demonstrate enthusiasm for sport and recreation locally and reflect the community's aspirations. Unlike national trends of declining participation, *Rangitikei Netball is bucking the trend as are other codes like basketball*, which we have also noted was completely missed off this consultation document.

Surface Considerations

Rangitikei Netball has taken great care to investigate surface options thoroughly. We have contacted multiple netball centres nationwide and received consistent advice:

Do not install a cushioned hard court system unless it is being laid on a brand-new pad with extremely low moisture content.

Our current pad does not meet these conditions. The recommended cushioned system includes a timber base, which is highly susceptible to moisture. In our local climate—where frost, ice and winter dampness are common—there is a high risk the surface would degrade quickly. No warranty information was provided for this option, which is concerning given the significant investment required. We believe this option is high-risk and unsuitable for Rangitikei. It also requires significant maintenance at a cost that has not been budgeted for by RDC yet.

Instead, we believe applying a **Plexi-pave or similar rubberised surface coating** is the most appropriate and cost-effective solution at this time. This surface type is something we have already budgeted for, requires no immediate significant financial input from Council, and would provide approximately **ten years of safe and functional use**, allowing RDC time to plan and fund a complete pad replacement in the future. This approach is practical, financially responsible, and aligned with current conditions.

Court Layout Planning

We have considered the court layout options presented and believe **4 courts** would be beneficial long term. However, the proposed area includes uneven and patched concrete, which would require substantial ground works before it was safe for use. For now, we recommend **retaining the courts in their current configuration and applying the rubberised surface coating**, ensuring no disruption to netball delivery. Once RDC is ready to redevelop the pad, we would welcome further discussion about *extending court capacity behind the existing area* to support future growth and event hosting.

In Summary, Rangitīkei Netball Recommends:

- Proceeding with **Plexi-pave or similar rubberised surface coating now** (fully funded by Netball).
- **Retaining current court layout short-term**, avoiding disruption to play.
- **Planning for full pad replacement and court extension in future**, using a 4 court option as the basis.
- Incorporating local participation evidence, including *Sport Whanganui's Voice of the Tamariki survey*.
- Avoiding high-risk surface solutions that are not suitable for our climate and site conditions.

We value Council's ongoing support and look forward to working collaboratively to ensure a long-term, future-focused solution that prioritises safety, sustainability, and community participation.

Ngā mihi nui,

Rangitīkei Netball Committee

Pictures from Paul Sharland

Rotorua Pool



Coastlands Aquatic Centre

