

Active Response VI

Slow and steady – thinking forward

People are walking, riding bikes and playing locally in backyards, on the streets and in parks. Natural environments are thriving. For many, the beauty and peace of green spaces and moving water has never had more appeal.

A Recreation Aotearoa [webinar](#) explored current issues in managing these spaces and places, and the impact as recreation ‘boundaries’ are expanded at level 3.

Industry experts advise taking a staged approach as the sector works towards re-opening spaces, places and facilities and engaging face to face with our communities.

Where is recreation happening?

Recreation will continue to be in public spaces and in local communities at [alert level 3](#).

- Leverage off the value of parks and open space to people’s physical and mental wellbeing.
- Rethink recreation places, and promote local streets, backyards and local parks as recreation venues, as the Chair of World Urban Parks says “[#NatureNeverCloses](#)”
- Identify recreation “hot spots” – these will need greater signage and management. Think about public toilets, and how these will be opened and cleaned
- Use a range of communication tools to help people to do the ‘right thing’. Ask people to make an assessment of their own skill levels and match these to the risk of the activity.
- Sport NZ will be launching a new **Active NZ**: Covid-19 online survey, with results available in June. Keep an eye out!



Figure 1 Cornwall Park, Auckland

Short Term Priorities

Asset managers need to think short and medium term priorities.

Engagement and communication

Provide clear and consistent messaging.

Community:

- Support new modes of online programme delivery – these have ongoing potential to expand reach and increase accessibility
- Collaborate across local authority boundaries to ensure consistent approaches to facility management
- Proactively communicate with the public using a combination of ‘soft’ messaging via Facebook and websites regarding non-use of equipment and respond openly with questions from the public
- Use signage and taping where possible and affordable.

Staff:

- Provide regular updates, facilitate online meetings and find fewer formal ways to engage to keep your staff motivated and productive
- Continue to use new models and ways of working.

Case study: Gisborne District Council sought government assistance to re-deploy forestry workers to assist parks and cemeteries contractors and indoor staff over a 12 week period. Another aspect of their staffing programme includes developing existing staff into leaders in order to manage bigger numbers of staff overall.

Asset maintenance and preparation

Consider what needs to be done to get places and spaces 'up to spec' and ready to re-open.

- Use the time at Level 3 to catch up on asset maintenance, undertaking any renovation work
- Ensure that critical infrastructure is maintained
- Maintain a strong focus on cleanliness and hygiene
- Care for animal welfare (zoos, wildlife parks).

Risk management

Ensuring physical distancing guidelines are maintained and limiting exposure.

- Manage cleanliness and hygiene of public spaces
- Keeping staff and contractors safe with each other in workspaces and with the public
- Provide PPE and training regarding potential hazard issues.

Medium term considerations

A maintenance re-set

Some asset managers are shifting their focus from areas such as playgrounds requiring high levels of maintenance and hygiene and re-focusing on 'wilderness' like areas for play and recreation; grass can be left to grow!

If specialised turf maintenance is required, there is up to date [information on restrictions](#).



Figure 2 Kāpiti Island from Waikanae Beach

Planning for each level

Think about the recreation opportunities that will be the focus as the country enters Levels 3, 2 and eventually 1. Use Sport NZ's [summary](#).

How will you manage physical distancing, contactless service delivery, and group size? You may also need to collect information about people using your service if contact tracing is required.

Have you considered:

- Facility preparation and opening with cleaning protocols in place
- Staff preparation including appropriate PPE, focus on cleanliness and hygiene, and any relevant training for working at the alert level
- Community engagement
- Service delivery.

Financial impact

- Budget constraints and impacts will have an impact on most providers. Prepare by identifying priority areas for ongoing funding.
- Local authorities and other venue managers will respond differently according to budget and financial reserves, but most are cutting CAPEX projects at least in the short term.
- Use the evidence of parks, open space and streetscapes as key contributors to community wellbeing. Value and invest in local parks for local communities rather than destination parks. Plan for "[Cities with Nature](#)".

Resources and links

For a **comprehensive discussion** of these issues watch the [webinar](#), or read the [FAQ's](#).

There is considerable information available through the [Recreation Aotearoa](#) and [SportNZ](#) Covid-19 websites which will be updated as new information comes to hand. The following provide some useful guidance:

- [Employer Responsibilities and Help](#)
- [Governance Support](#)
- [Navigating through unprecedented times](#)