



Community effort transforms park

SMART WATERING CASE STUDY: MACKENZIE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT BOARD

A big community effort is about to transform a scraggly sportsground in Twizel into a lush green playing surface.

The five acre park in the middle of town is partly used by Twizel Area School, which waters, mows and maintains a small area, but a community group spearheaded by Twizel mum Megan Lynch is bringing the rest of it up to scratch.

Transforming the area will be a joint effort involving the Mackenzie District Council, the school and newly-formed Sports Twizel, a group formed recently to help with the difficulties of operating sports organisations in the small, rural community.

The result of their combined efforts, in a few months, will be an inviting expansive green space, where the local football and rugby teams can host competition games. The fields will also be used for summer football and touch rugby.

The project has Megan and her sports-mad husband Chris fizzing about what could be achieved for local sports groups and teams, who currently have to travel 90 minutes to Timaru or Oamaru if they want to play in organised competitions. Provide the pitch, they say, and the sportspeople will come.

But it has wider benefits for the fast-growing community – the grassed area borders the local swimming pool, skatepark, tennis courts, event centre and shopping area and will be used by locals and visitors alike.

Megan is a community development worker for the Mackenzie Community Enhancement Board and is corralling an enthusiastic group of volunteers who will share knowledge and resources to make it happen.

Work has already begun. The field has been sprayed to kill off dandelions, clover and other unwanted weeds that have strangled the pasture. It will be rolled, direct drilled with a drought-resistant grass seed and then carefully watered.

Irrigation could be a problem in summer, when the hydro lakes area typically bakes in temperatures of around 30 degrees and the town is on water restrictions and holidaymakers flock to the area. But Megan and her team are in luck – a 1970s map of the school and surrounding grounds shows an underground network of water pipes laid for irrigation when the park was formed. The volunteers will be able to access the pipes for watering, but it will be strictly regulated.

Megan said the water restrictions meant the best irrigation delivery method would be carefully researched so not a precious drop was wasted. And as a semi-council project, it would have to abide to the same rules as others give water was sourced from the town's reservoir.

She said it was a challenge the group was up for and technology and people-power would make sure there was enough moisture for optimum growing conditions.

The group would also seek support from funding groups to help with the transformation costs.

Megan said the success of a football school involving 50 children had led to a futsal competition involving more than 100 adults and children, proving locals were keen to be active. The only thing missing was a playable pitch.



Megan Lynch with the transformed sports turf



Megan Lynch and the untended area



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