

Press Release  
(For immediate release)  
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## **New Waverley venue bowls 'em over**

An ambitious quest to build New Zealand's only covered bowling green has taken camaraderie to a new level at the Waverley Bowling Club with members clocking up nearly 3000 volunteer hours to achieve it.

"It's actually pulled the whole club together – they can be justifiably proud of what they've done because it's just incredible," immediate past president Robyn Willett said.

The state-of-the-art venue in Invercargill, which features impressive lighting and diesel heating, will be officially opened next month, signaling the end of an extensive three-year project.

"I never thought I would see this achieved in my lifetime ... and it wouldn't have been without the support of the ILT and the ILT Foundation who contributed the major share of funding required," Willett said.

The Invercargill Licensing Trust and ILT Foundation contributed \$195,994 and \$500,000 respectively to the project – another massive investment in the city's sporting infrastructure alongside projects the calibre of Stadium Southland, the ILT Velodrome and ILT Hockey Turf.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said the new facility was "another jewel in Invercargill's sporting crown".

"When the first bowl is sent down that green it will be a tribute to the tireless efforts of those who had the vision and unwavering commitment needed to make this happen."

The covered green concept was first mooted in 2007.

"Our eager beavers that go across the ditch to Australia came back with the idea that they'd like to put down an artificial green ... then they had the bright idea they'd like to cover it," Willett said.

"They called it the Waverley Lid for quite a while."

Installation of the artificial green was ticked off in 2008 but that was just the first step in the club's grand plan.

With Southland's inclement weather often wreaking havoc for bowlers, Waverley's vision was quickly embraced by fellow clubs throughout the province and the sport's governing body, Bowls Southland.

"We are now even planning a summer and winter bowling programme because we no longer have to shut our green down in the colder months," Willett said.

"It's just opened up a host of opportunities for all sectors of the community, including corporates and charities.

"Waverley may have built it, but this is a facility that will be used by clubs from throughout Southland and has the potential to attract national and international events – it's very exciting."

Ray Harper, a life member of the Waverley club, said the new venue, designed and built by Calder Stewart, was a valuable asset for the city.

“If any area desperately needed a covered green, it was this end of the world. We get a lot of bowls put off here – the rain drives us mad,” he said.

“This facility has been a dream come true – it’s as good as I’ve seen anywhere in Australasia and it’s great to see Invercargill leading the way yet again.”

Preserving the \$200,000 existing green during the build was vital to success.

“If we were starting fresh in a paddock the last thing we would have put down was the cloth but it was already here so the biggest worry was protecting it,” Harper said.

Despite being covered for several months with polythene and chipboard, which was donated by Dongwha Patinna, the green emerged unscathed when the protection was lifted earlier this week – although club member Bob Sutherland confessed to “a nervous wee peek”.

“It’s bloody wonderful,” he said.

Match committee convener Keith Smith said Waverley would continue to host up to 128 bowlers playing at any one time by utilising both its covered and outdoor greens.

“I’m just itching to play on it,” he said.

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