

26 November 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INVESTMENT IN SOUTHLAND FOOTBALL SUPERBLY TIMED

The qualification of the All Whites into the 2010 FIFA World Cup couldn't have come at a better time according to Footballsouth Southland regional development officer and former All White Ken Cresswell.

The \$1.8 million development at Turnbull Thomson Park in Invercargill combined with the qualification of the All Whites is set to rocket the sport into popularity.

"I think the achievement of the All Whites and our project will definitely have a spinoff in this region," Cresswell said.

"The timing is superb. The event and the achievement in relation to what we are doing in Southland are just superb. It will definitely increase the participation numbers in 2010."

The Turnbull Thomson redevelopment will incorporate an artificial turf the size of one and-a-half pitches as well as flood lighting and a refurbishment of the clubrooms located at the end of Islington St.

Southland Football chairman Jeff Walker said the artificial pitch was a community resource which should encourage all ages to participate in the game.

"We want school children to use it during the day, competitions after school and then clubs training on it at night.

"What we're hoping to do is make it accessible right across the whole football family. I see it dramatically changing the game. There's nothing in the South Island like it."

Diggers are on standby waiting for the final consent from the Invercargill City Council.

"We're just waiting for the first spade to be shovelled now," Cresswell said.

The major funders of the project are the ILT Foundation (\$1 million) and the Invercargill Licensing Trust (\$340,000).

Walker said it wasn't only the financial backing the ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust had assisted with.

"They were quick to realise that if we couldn't complete the whole project then we had to prioritise what it was we wanted first.

"They also have expertise in major projects so they were able to recommend how we could do things better or cheaper."

All going to plan the work is expected to be finished by April 1 – in time for next year's football season.

Cresswell said it was hoped that members of the All Whites would visit before the World Cup campaign began in June - even possibly for the ground's official opening.

"We have a number of ideas of what and how we would open the facility. One of those would involve some of the All Whites if we could get them here," Cresswell said.

The organisation was now looking at extending its coaching and refereeing programmes to accommodate the increase in players, he said.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said the brilliant achievement of the All Whites was something the sport should definitely take advantage of.

"We knew this development would help encourage participation in this wonderful game but we now think this project could be even bigger than we imagined thanks to the success of our national team.

"We are excited to be supporting an organisation which is going through an enormous phase of resurgence and redevelopment."

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