

BADMINTON SOUTHLAND NEXT IN LINE FOR WORLD-CLASS VENUE

INVERCARGILL is set to get another world-class sporting venue with financial help from the Invercargill Licensing Trust and ILT Foundation.

The latest sport to benefit is Badminton Southland which will use the \$145,000 (\$110,000 from the ILT Foundation and \$35,000 from ILT) in grants to replace its existing courts with wooden sprung-floor courts.

Badminton Southland and World Badminton Federation vice president Nigel Skelt said the new courts have already meant the organisation is set to host the Oceania Badminton championships in February next year. "This is the biggest international tournament over 12 days – the biggest one New Zealand will host."

The tournament would host between 200 and 300 players and although the competition would be held in Stadium Southland, 10 wooden sprung-floor courts were required for training for the teams while in Invercargill.

With the top venue in New Zealand, the national team would base itself in Invercargill before the tournament and it was also hoped the city would also be in a great position to bid to become the High Performance Training Centre for Oceania.

"World Badminton has set a goal that there will be a training centre for each continent. Oceania hasn't got one at the moment," Skelt said.

At the moment the courts at the Surrey Park courts are constructed of concrete and asphalt – some are 65 years old.

"A wooden surface is the ideal surface for a better training centre," he said.

Work will start on the courts at the beginning of September with the project set to take between six to eight weeks to complete. Specialists from Christchurch will lay the floor with help from local contractors, Skelt said.

It was hoped the courts would be available on Saturday's for netball teams who needed an area to warm-up, he said.

ILT Foundation and ILT chairman Alan Dennis said the success of creating other world-class venues in the city meant that the decision to grant this money had been an easy one.

"We already see the benefits from creating the ILT Velodrome and developing the hockey water turfs at Turnbull Thomson Park.

"This is another venue that will attract players from throughout New Zealand and the world creating a boost to our local economy," he said.

"More important than that is the creation of a terrific venue for the people who live here. Hopefully this will spur many of our young people into the game who will benefit from the elite players and coaches who will be attracted to our province."