

The shape of sport for the future

Bill Moore

billmoore@nzherald.co.nz

The Saxon Oval Pavilion's distinctive shape will help it stand out on the national and international map. Tourism deputy mayor Tim King said at the unusual building's official opening yesterday.

Shaped like an oval cylinder to reflect the athletic track and cricket ground it sits between, the \$1.8 million building would be easily recognised as a Nelson identifier when events were shown on television, Mr King said.

He paid tribute to the architects, Nelson's Artchess Architects, and the builders from First Constructors by Stoke, who he said would have found the job challenging but could look at it when they drove past and say "we built that".

Mr King said Saxon Field was being created "probably one of the best sporting facilities in the country", and in one to two years the next stage would link "what's currently a bit of a wasteland" to Main Road Stoke and Richmond's Avon Sportsfields.

Nelson Mayor Aida Muiro said the new pavilion was "truly a magnificent facility" that could be used for national and international events and would be enjoyed by generations of Nelsonians.

Gifts handed by the two councils included \$70,000 in donations. The building was completed within 12 months. The \$1.8 million from the two councils was split 40:20, with Nelson paying the lion's share.

The building features a central friction space with large windows overlooking the grounds on both sides, three tennis changing rooms, a bar, a kitchen, public toilets and three-logging and storage spaces.

Football will share it with athletics and cricket, and it will also be available for public functions.

Saxon Field Pavilion Trust chairman Vern Mardon said the building was completed within a year of the city council giving it the green light, after a spirited push by Councillor Paul Methuen.

"And you know what? It's all paid for."

He said the fundraising provided a blueprint for future projects. The trust began by putting together a "very thorough and professional" case, and then ran a huge amount of work into its funding applications.

The money came from a variety of sources, initially \$30,000 from the Lion



Home base: The new \$1.8 million Saxon Oval Pavilion can be used for national and international events.

Photo: MARION VAN OUDENBURG/ABC NEWS NZ



End of the road: Saxon Field Pavilion Trust chairman Vern Mardon and Marion Aitken, widow of former Nelson City Councillor and pavilion stalwart Colin Aitken.

Foundation, \$40,000 from Nelson Cricket, and \$50,000 from businessman John Rutherford, daughter of trust deputy chairman and cricket stalwart Jack Rutherford, who wanted recognition for her father's lifetime contribution to the game. The pavilion's bar has been officially named the Jack Rutherford Bar, after Mr Rutherford declined to have it named directly for him.

The trust then received \$400,000 from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board

and \$100,000 from the Canterbury Community Trust. The final \$165,000 came from poker machines trust the Maxwell Foundation, in two lots of \$60,000 and a final \$25,000 to meet the target.

Mr Mardon said the support from the various fund trustees, community leaders and local body officers had been tremendous.

He paid special thanks to former Nelson city councillor Colin Aitken, who had chaired the company service committee and put "hundreds and



Joint efforts: Nelson Mayor Aida Muiro prizes the "magnificent facility" at the opening yesterday.

hundreds of hours into helping to get here today".

Mr Aitken, who died at the beginning of the year after battling cancer, served as chairman of the regional funding forum and as both a player and administrator in a number of sports, particularly cricket, rugby and bowls.

All the speakers at yesterday's function praised his contribution to the Saxon Field development and the pavilion project.

His widow, Marion, said afterwards that it was a proud day for her.

"I would have loved it. Saxon Field was his passion."

Mr Aitken wanted to see facilities developed that the region's young people would aspire to use in their sport, and had lived long enough to know that the project was going ahead. Her verdict on the new ground: "It's magnificent."