

Strategy

2026 - 2029

At Tennis Canterbury, we love tennis and we are passionate about nurturing it. We believe tennis helps people stay active, build friendships and feel part of their community. From local clubs to regional events, our role is to support these communities to thrive.

The following strategy sets the direction (our priorities and what success looks like) for Tennis Canterbury from July 2026 to June 2029, and is supported by an operations plan that details the actions and measures that will turn this direction into results.

The Tennis Landscape

Tennis is a sport for life, offering physical activity, social connection, skill development and competition across all ages and abilities.

Clubs are the heart of organised tennis, providing places for people to learn, play, compete and connect. Across Canterbury, there are nearly 50 affiliated clubs with over 6,000 members.

These clubs offer junior and adult programmes, delivered by nationally registered coaches and have access to interclub competitions, national initiatives, and grant funding.

Schools are an important entry point into tennis, introducing young people to the game through beginner programmes and inter-school competitions, often creating pathways into ongoing club participation.

Participation in organised tennis broadly falls into four segments:

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| • Foundation | (15%) | Introductory programmes for juniors and adults |
| • Social | (50%) | Recreational play for enjoyment, fitness and connection |
| • Competitive | (33%) | Structured competitions and tournaments |
| • Performance | (2%) | Elite junior development |

Beyond organised tennis, around 18,000 people also play casually on public courts with friends and family.

The Challenges and Opportunities

Strong clubs create vibrant tennis communities. They provide a home for the sport and help shape the reputation of tennis within their communities. Where clubs are welcoming, well-run, and offer quality facilities and programmes, participation grows. When clubs flourish, tennis flourishes.

Most clubs rely on a team of dedicated volunteers to manage governance, facilities and programme delivery. Many Canterbury clubs have been part of their community for over 100 years and have seen strong membership, capable leadership, and good funding.

However, rising costs, declining volunteer capacity and, in some cases, declining membership, have made it harder for clubs to remain sustainable. While there are some clubs doing well - growing membership, strong junior pipelines, well maintained facilities, good programmes, vibrant social environments, and paid staff - there are other clubs that would benefit from additional support.

Participation expectations have also shifted, with people wanting sport to be flexible and easy to access. Barriers such as difficulty finding a club or playing partner, limited casual play options, and a lack of easy online booking can make it harder for people to engage with tennis.

Many young people are introduced to tennis through schools, but this interest is not always effectively transitioned into ongoing club involvement. Without consistent connections and programmes with visible next steps, potential players can easily disengage.

There is a significant number of casual players outside of organised tennis. Many are playing regularly on public courts – some may even be former club members who have moved away from organised play. With limited casual playing options, lack of easy access and minimal communication, this is a largely untapped market.

Pickleball and padel are rapidly attracting new players, and some clubs are already repurposing courts. While this presents opportunities to grow membership and increase revenue, planning is needed to protect the long-term future of tennis infrastructure.

Most club facilities are part of a wider network of ratepayer-funded community assets supported by local authorities. Some of these council-owned club courts are already under pressure from mixed use with netball. Ensuring facilities remain available, well utilised and aligned with community needs, particularly in high-growth communities or where tennis membership is lower, will require stronger regional planning and collaboration.

These challenges and opportunities highlight where Tennis Canterbury can make the greatest impact over the next three years:

- Help clubs become easier to run and better equipped to attract and keep members
 - Make it easier for more people to find, organise and play tennis
 - Ensure quality infrastructure is delivered and co-ordinated across the region
 - Ensure Tennis Canterbury has the capability and resources to deliver these outcomes
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Our Vision

A thriving tennis community where tennis is easy to access, easy to play and easy to stay involved in.

Our Role

Tennis Canterbury is the member-owned regional body responsible for leading, supporting and growing tennis across Canterbury and the West Coast.

We work alongside clubs, coaches, volunteers, players, schools, funders and partners to:

- grow participation and the visibility of tennis
 - support thriving and sustainable clubs
 - deliver quality competitions and tournaments
 - deliver high-performance pathways
 - provide regional leadership and strategic direction
 - advocate for regional facilities and infrastructure
 - manage the regional organisation and Wilding Park responsibly for long-term sustainability
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Our Stakeholders

Community - clubs, players, parents, coaches, volunteers, schools, staff and board members

Partners - Wilding Park Foundation, funders, sponsors, Sport Canterbury, local authorities and Tennis New Zealand

Our Values

Committed - to clubs, players, coaches and the game

Trustworthy - professional, reliable and accountable

Easy to work with - collaborative, helpful and responsive

Our Strategic Priorities

Over the next three years, Tennis Canterbury will focus on four priorities that will strengthen clubs, grow participation and ensure tennis remains sustainable across the region.

1. Help Clubs Thrive

What we will focus on:

- making clubs easier to run by reducing duplication and easing the burden on volunteers
- helping clubs attract and retain members
- helping clubs make the most of their facilities and resources
- working with clubs to plan for shared use with pickleball and/or padel
- strengthening clubs' financial sustainability
- strengthening coaching and player pathways

What success looks like

Clubs are vibrant, welcoming and inclusive. They are well led and financially sustainable. Volunteers spend less time on admin and duplication, and more on things that grow membership and support lifelong participation - quality facilities, coaching and programmes and a great club environment. Clubs are embracing other racquet sports where suitable for their facility and communities. Clubs value Tennis Canterbury as a trusted, practical partner that makes running a club easier.

2. Get More People Playing

What we will focus on:

- making tennis easier to discover and access by improving visibility of clubs and programmes
- helping clubs reduce barriers by providing more flexible ways to play and easier online booking
- helping clubs actively engage with casual and lapsed players
- strengthening pathways from school, casual play, and returning members into club tennis

What success looks like

Finding and starting tennis is simple, whether someone is brand new, at school, returning after time away, or just wants a social hit. Clubs are providing more flexible playing opportunities and people know where to go, how to book, and who to ask. Participation is visibly growing at clubs and at Wilding Park as a result.

3. Improve Regional Facilities

What we will focus on:

- working with councils and partners to develop a co-ordinated regional approach to tennis facilities, including planning for shared and multi-code (pickleball, padel, netball) that protects long-term access to facilities
- advocating for investment where it will have the greatest impact and long-term sustainability
- strengthening regional participation hubs

What success looks like

Canterbury has a well-planned network of tennis facilities that better reflect community needs, are well utilised and support long-term participation. Tennis Canterbury, clubs, councils and partners are aligned and work together to invest in vibrant, high quality shared-use hubs. Wilding Park keeps developing as the region's flagship venue and a facility other clubs can learn from.

4. Deliver a Strong Regional Organisation

What we will focus on:

- continuing to strengthen leadership and governance
- maintaining financial strength and organisational capability to meet future needs
- building relationships so we are a trusted regional leader

What success looks like

Tennis Canterbury is a trusted and effective regional leader seen as reliable and easy to work with. It operates with clear governance, sound finances and good operational leadership. It is a future-focused organisation with the capability and resources to deliver its strategic priorities and enable tennis to thrive across Canterbury for generations to come.