



WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST

Newsletter No. 1 March 2014

This is the first update *Newsletter* in 2014 for members and supporters of the Wellington Civic Trust. For the archive of earlier Newsletters see <http://www.wellingtoncivictrust.org/newsletters>

Feel free to circulate this further or to copy (with acknowledgement) from it. For more information, or for suggestions as to what you would like the Newsletter to cover, see our website or contact secretary@wellingtoncivictrust.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday evening May 5th 2014, 5.30 for 6pm. The formal AGM will be preceded by light refreshments and followed by the Guest Speaker, with the event closing around 7.15pm. Venue yet to be finalized – but it will be in the CBD!

This year's guest speaker is Geraldine Murphy, President of the Inner City Association – www.ica.org.nz. Incorporated in 2009 as the Wellington Inner City Residents and Business Association, it was formed to represent those who live or own businesses in Te Aro and the CBD (to Buckle and Webb St in the south, SH1 and The Terrace in the west, Bowen and Whitmore St in the north, and the Waterfront and Kent Tce in the northeast and east), as well as to promote, develop and improve the services and facilities of the area for the benefit of residents and businesses. Any resident in that area is a member - 'resident' includes property owners, tenants, groups, schools, bodies corporate, churches, businesses, clubs, and

similar organisations within those boundaries. Such individuals or groups can be entitled to voting membership by paying an annual subscription of \$10.

Many of our Civic Trust interests focus around the compact inner city. It will be useful and challenging to discuss our positions on these with those who actually live there.

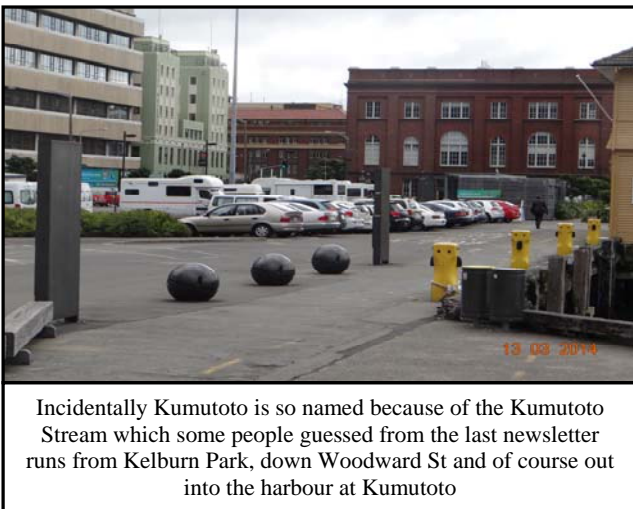
CAPITAL CONNECTIONS (PROPOSED SEMINAR)

Regrettably we have postponed this event, planned for March 29th, until later this year (date yet to be set). The reasons were our uncertainties about programme quality and completeness which we would want to have had firmly in place by now. There has also been a growing realization of the potential scope of this topic – related to the distinctive advantages for, and characteristics of, Wellington City as the

national capital. We felt that we were at risk of addressing some issues “once over lightly” when they deserved better to meet our goal of helping raise public debate and awareness. Many thanks to Trustees Craig Palmer, Jim McMahon and Bruce Stokell for their work on this.

We believe that the topic remains worthwhile and will revisit it as a public seminar topic when we know whether any changed form of the “Capital City Council” is likely as we approach the 2015 celebration of 150 years of Wellington as Capital City.

THE NEXT WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT – KUMUTOTO SITE 10



Incidentally Kumutoto is so named because of the Kumutoto Stream which some people guessed from the last newsletter runs from Kelburn Park, down Woodward St and of course out into the harbour at Kumutoto

This, on the “campervan” site in Waterloo Quay opposite the NZ Post HQ, went out for consultation in January. Our response is on the website and is based around continuing support for the *2001 Waterfront Framework* which should and must be the context in which all developments are assessed.

Some main points for us:

1) The guidelines from the Environment Court in its Variation 11 decision included “*New buildings are to be designed in a coherent fashion so they relate to and complement each other*”. With this Site 10 proposal there was only a vague array of development options for Site 8. WWL advise that there is a 3-level development proposal for Site 9 which will ‘be in keeping’ with the Site 10 proposal; there would “preferably be a civic amenity on the ground floor of Site 9” and that Willis Bond, which has a two-year option on the site, is “actively working” on the development proposal. But at this stage there is no indication of when those details might be revealed.

2) Those Environment Court guidelines require “*Strong connection to the CBD*”. There are no proposals for any change in pedestrian access from the CBD to the Kumutoto precinct. Traffic experts have rejected more crossings for two reasons – they would impede smooth flow vehicle traffic at the Whitmore St / Waterloo Quay intersection, particularly at peak times; and both crossing points looked at would be within very short distance of existing pedestrian crossings. There must be some more imaginative ways of improving the connection. The plans show a public covered walkway on both (road and sea) sides of the proposed building and better pedestrian ways to Bluebridge and the Station on the seaward side of the brick Waterloo Apartments. “*Strong Connections*” would logically include the existing pedestrian access through the Apartments’ portico so that it is better lit and user-friendly. This is surely in WWL’s interest and those of its occupants – the usability and quality of the public approach to its area.

3) The proposed building complements the maritime character of the area. It is light and glassy/translucent - it obscures the brutalism of the Post building from the waterfront, and its visible support struts add a structural element rather in keeping with a working maritime environment. The cantilevered roof at the southern end frames the Ferry Building, and adds about 1000m² of covered or sheltered open space in what is now the caravan park. Overall, there is little objection to the style and finish of the building.

4) The extra floor, occupying 3.7m above the guideline height recommended by the Environment Court, is to offset the costs of providing significant ground level open space, including the angled pedestrian access from Waterloo Quay to the waterfront. That may be the commercial reality but it will be seen as provocative by opponents of commercial and large-scale development on this site. There are proposals offered in mitigation, for example to have a 'green roof', with possibly public access to it. Given there are such limited high level public viewing points around the waterfront, this would be a significant plus. We accept that the set-back of the upper floor mitigates the effects of the extra height and ask that permanent public access during daylight hours to the roof garden be a condition of approval. As experience at the old the Herd St P&T building shows, it is very hard to make this sort of public roof access work after the building is in use.

5) Overall, we do not oppose the development, but oppose aspects of it, and some of its effects, particularly on the seaward side. As for Site 8, proposals now are too vague to comment on. We are firmly of the opinion there should be

NO buildings on this designated open space site (whether temporary or permanent) and solutions might include planting, seating, and descending access to the water, similar to development around the rowing club lagoon.

THE CITY COUNCIL'S 2014/15 PLAN

We intend to respond to statutory Annual Plans and the like by checking the extent to which these support *Smart Capital 2040* and the *8-point Economic Growth Agenda* released earlier this year. The aim: making visions real, not comfortably nebulous.

The "Key project Environment" plans to implement priorities set in the Open Spaces & Recreation Strategy

www.wellington.govt.nz/your-council/projects/our-capital-spaces

The Civic Trust response will reiterate our position on the Town Belt, Kaiwharawhara reclamation and related green corridor and support the 5% increase in Zealandia funding.

The Council plans to bring 2 of its CCOs – the Waterfront and Cable Car companies – "in house" for what seem to be mainly administrative efficiency reasons. More important really is to gain a much more positive relationship with GWRC as the public transport provider for both the cable car and the trolleybus network (at present this seems to be contractual/administrative rather than positively functional).

Under Transport, the WCC "will continue to work with NZTA re State Highways" – we will

be emphasizing here our position that continuing to run SH1 down Vivian St as a permanent “Road of National Significance” is inconsistent with 2040. The Draft Plan’s focus on cycleways seems sound, and the ways in which these tie with an energized Great Harbour Way offer some real urban design distinctiveness for Wellington.

On the incentives to support and encourage earthquake strengthening funding, we will be urging even more effort. Wellington can gain by being a leader here.



Urban development priority projects include work for the Parliamentary Precinct and the War Memorial Park. Anticipating our Seminar, we are urging here action on the connecting corridors between these national capital city features.

The full Civic Trust submission on the Draft Plan will be on our Website in mid-March.

BUILDING (EARTHQUAKE-PRONE BUILDINGS) AMENDMENT BILL

This completed its first reading on March 5th and is due to report back from the Select Committee on 5th September 2014. Our

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submission to it will be a major bit of policy and will be based around the sub-committee work led by Bill Robertson last year.

Anticipating this and related matters, Alan Smith attended a first-ever collective meeting of the Auckland, Wellington, Akaroa and Christchurch Civic Trusts on January 30th. The southern venue city was deliberately chosen to emphasize the gravity of natural hazard impacts on heritage structures and on urban design generally; and the half-day meeting itself took place in the listed “Sutton House”, in the Red Zone and about to be boarded up. We will be developing a collective response to the Bill; and generally looking to see how the work of each Civic Trust can be improved by mutual synergies.

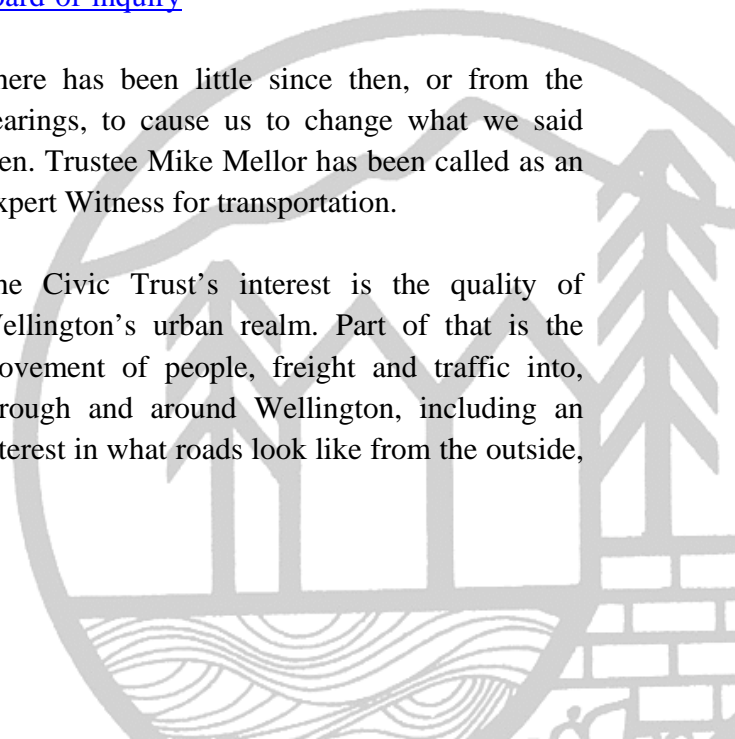
THE BASIN FLYOVER

The consents hearings are experiencing many changes of schedule as the timetable slips from the weight of evidence and cross examination. Our oral input (“representation” in the jargon) will build on our September 2013 submission

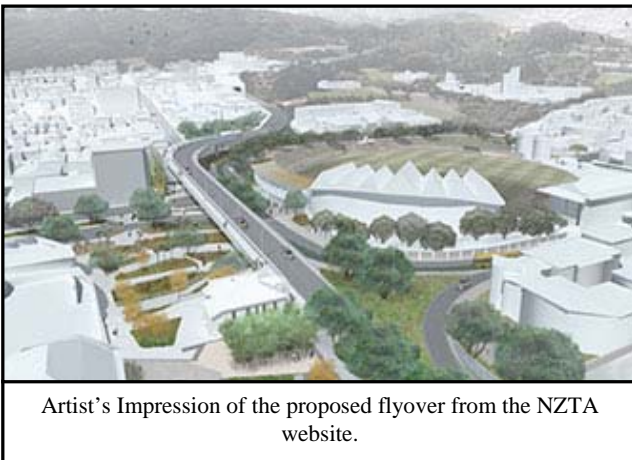
www.wellingtoncivictrust.org/basin-bridge-epa-board-of-inquiry

There has been little since then, or from the hearings, to cause us to change what we said then. Trustee Mike Mellor has been called as an Expert Witness for transportation.

The Civic Trust’s interest is the quality of Wellington’s urban realm. Part of that is the movement of people, freight and traffic into, through and around Wellington, including an interest in what roads look like from the outside,



and how they add to the design quality of the capital city. We believe that the *Ngauranga-to-Airport Corridor Strategy 2008* remains a reasonable basis for improving the movement of people and freight between the airport and the north; NZTA said in cross-examination that its project fits both that and current transport policies introduced since the by the new government. Criteria of “affordability” imply that there is a limit over which an option becomes “not affordable”. The inference is that this cost limit is set by the cost of the proposed one-way bridge – a self-fulfilling prophecy? As the experience of the War Memorial Park undergrounding shows, what is “unaffordable” one month can become “affordable” the next – indeed, can suddenly become “the only sensible option”.



Artist's Impression of the proposed flyover from the NZTA website.

Our view is that the project fails in respect of each of the factors which the Board has to consider (i) The Minister’s reasons for referring the proposal to the Board (ii) project objectives; and (iii) strategic fit. Judge Whiting (Board Chair) noted at the start of the hearings some main factors: are the works reasonably necessary to achieve the objectives? And has there been a major consideration of alternatives?

The City Council’s *Economic Growth Agenda to transform Wellington City* was released the week before the hearings began. One key goal is more international connections for people and freight at the airport. The Airport Company’s view is that the ultimate form of this route needs to be 4 lanes (2 each way). Right now there are 4 lanes (2 in each direction) between Paterson and Tory Sts – i.e. through the area defined in the project objectives - so presumably what WIAL means is a 4-lane road like Cobham Drive. The proposal ignores this in favour of NZTA’s “far-sighted, long-term, multi-modal transportation solution” of split corridors (one along Vivian St.) for SH1.

Vivian St and Kent Tce are in the central area where increased residential population and foot traffic are envisaged in *Smart Capital 2040*. A project which requires growing SH 1 traffic to cut through this central area by ordinary at-grade crossings is not a strategic fit. The tabled evidence confirms that NZTA’s study on the long-term needs of Vivian St will be finished after work on the one-way bridge has begun but before it is in use, and after the designation of the Inner-City Bypass corridor (Karo Drive, etc.) for SH 1 is reduced. Probably traffic flow along Vivian St and Kent Tce could treble what it is now by reducing more parking, closing off side streets and so on. The carrying capacity of Vivian St is not the issue – the Civic Trust concern is the effect that this carrying capacity has on those who live and work near to it. The proposal’s outcome, although “permitted”, would degrade the surrounding area and cause more conflict with the at-grade crossings of public transport corridors at Willis, Victoria, Taranaki, Cambridge and Kent.

Traffic expert conferencing noted that the Pirie/Kent/Vivian intersection is close now to capacity in the pm peak with little spare for further growth beyond 2021. It recommends more investigation to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to accommodate traffic growth beyond then. Our comments on this are:

- i. A road engineering answer might be to just knock down the Greek Memorial, Logan Browns and other places in the way, smooth the corner and widen the road
- ii. 2021 is just over 5 years away. It's only 5 years since the RoNS status of this road was promulgated in the first place.
- iii. Why have all that SH1 traffic coming down Vivian St anyway if it's a true RoNS?



Vivian St – a state highway running through the city

If the proposal is consented, Wellington faces the prospect of a repeat performance when it is realized that Vivian St and Kent Tce are not appropriate for use as a RoNS and that another arrangement is in fact needed for the Basin. We are saying that if this situation is envisaged at all, it should be part of the present consents process. The Board can then test whether Vivian St meets RoNS objectives better (efficiency,

cost, effectiveness, national benefit, quality, safety, etc.) than the shorter route around the edge of the central area along a corridor set up over many years for SH 1 and already half-used for that purpose.

The south-east corner (Kent / Ellice / Dufferin) is a real problem for the project. The complexity at the very point where the merge of SH1 and the PTSS is most congested is now also to be a BRT junction, all with a light-controlled crossing just around the corner. To cap it off, it's the main approach to Government House. This is the view that visitors will have on the main processional route between Parliament and the Head of State's residence – two main centres of Wellington as the Capital City of 100% pure New Zealand. NZTA tended to brush this off by saying that "There is a longer-term vision here, and that is to create an enhancement of this area generally... then you have got the connections with Government House..... you've also got the processional issue and how that might play out over time." Well no – it's a day 1 fact.

The design concept is an "elegant" bridge rather than an "iconic" one. There is a real risk of an "elegant" bridge soon becoming festooned with underhanging signs, overhead signal gantries, banners draped over the handrails and the normal grime and staining which a concrete bridge incurs. It is highly visible, and consent should require much more than just its effectiveness as a traffic conveyor. To this end, we are noting to the Hearings our concerns over low-quality design features.

In summary – we're well aware that no RoNS project has ever yet been declined consent. But it is worth putting our views on record, with the

aim of influencing the conditions or other outcomes. The Civic Trust interest is a prosperous Wellington with effective transport and a quality of urban design which attracts people to live and work here. The design features in the proposal risk decay after the initial novelty has worn off, and we are left with an in-your-face concrete structure becoming just another road bridge. The real concern is that it doesn't actually do a useful job anyway of separating SH1 from local traffic and from public transport; it requires mingling of PTSS and SH1 traffic; and destroys both the Boulevard of Kent/Cambridge and the ability of Vivian St to be what it was built as over a century ago – an inner-city street of use to a growing inner-city population. These are all predictable and known effects of the Basin Bridge for which the Board is being asked to grant consents.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SPINE (PTSS)

The Regional Land Transport Committee's decision was released on 5 March for a Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] mode – rather than light rail or “enhanced bus” – on two routes rather than just one along the growth spine to Kilbirnie.

Our Civic Trust position at the consultation was, in summary:

The 2008 Ngauranga -to-Airport Corridor Strategy remains a good framework as does the City Council's Transport Strategy's need for “a seamless passenger transport system along the growth spine” between Johnsonville and the Airport. The PTSS is inconsistent: it does not cover the full length of the Corridor, and no

options allow for the required seamless system: all require changing at the Wellington Railway Station interchange.

The Wellington Regional Land Transport Strategy has a target of 23m peak period trips per annum by 2020, an increase of 31% in 7 years over the 2013 level of 17.6 million, approximately 4% p.a. The modelling on which the PTSS study is based predicts a 15% increase in the AM peak in the 20 years between 2011 and 2031, approximately 0.8% p.a., less than a quarter of the rate required by the RLTS.

Irrespective of the option chosen, full bus priority should be introduced along the Golden Mile as a matter of urgency. However, the preferred BRT option is limited to 60 vehicles an hour (half the current maximum rate). It seems bizarre to build a high-quality spine that is of insufficient capacity from day one (let alone for future increases that the RLTS requires), and this should prompt a re-think.

Interchange arrangements at Newtown/the hospital should be considered carefully, and the option of extending from there to Kilbirnie given full consideration.

The Basin–Kilbirnie route would likely need land taken from the Town Belt, and serves no significant intermediate points such as Hataitai shops, unlike current buses.

In the CBD, pedestrians along the Golden Mile are aware of the noise from diesel buses and the comparative quietness of trolleybuses. There is talk of “electric buses”, while parallel re-tendering work on bus services generally assumes “a replacement of the current trolleybus

network”. The potential for enhancement of the urban environment should be included as a primary factor in implementation. With the right decisions, we could renew something like the Wellington vision of 100 years ago when new technologies and civic leadership worked together - “step change” in the jargon. Growing PT use strengthens vitality of the regional CBD, and reduces the demand for more road space. The chosen solution could be a real improvement on the present streetscape.

NORTHERN GATEWAY – KAIWHARAWHARA

A Draft *Review of the Regional Coastal Plan* is expected to be released for consultation in September. CentrePort is seeking lower notification thresholds for new development near the Kaiwharawhara Stream Estuary. Reclamations in the harbour and along stream beds are also targeted for lower thresholds.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Local Government Commission’s decision on councils in the Wellington area is expected to be released for comment in the first two weeks of April.

A COLLECTIVE CIVIC TRUST VIEW

On January 30th the Christchurch Civic Trust hosted a meeting of representatives of Civic Trust Auckland, Wellington Civic Trust, the Christchurch Civic Trust and the Akaroa Civic Trust. This was thought to be the first time ever that our organizations had ever met in a combined session, the trigger being whether there would be value in sharing ideas and approaches to respond

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to the Buildings (Earthquake-prone buildings) Amendment Bill, as well as to the further waves of RMA reform.

Christchurch as the location was specially chosen because the earthquakes have posed highly visible evidence of many of the issues which we each face; and the wonderful modernist W.A.Sutton House in Richmond was our venue - just a few weeks before this listed but red-zoned building was due to be vacated and boarded up.

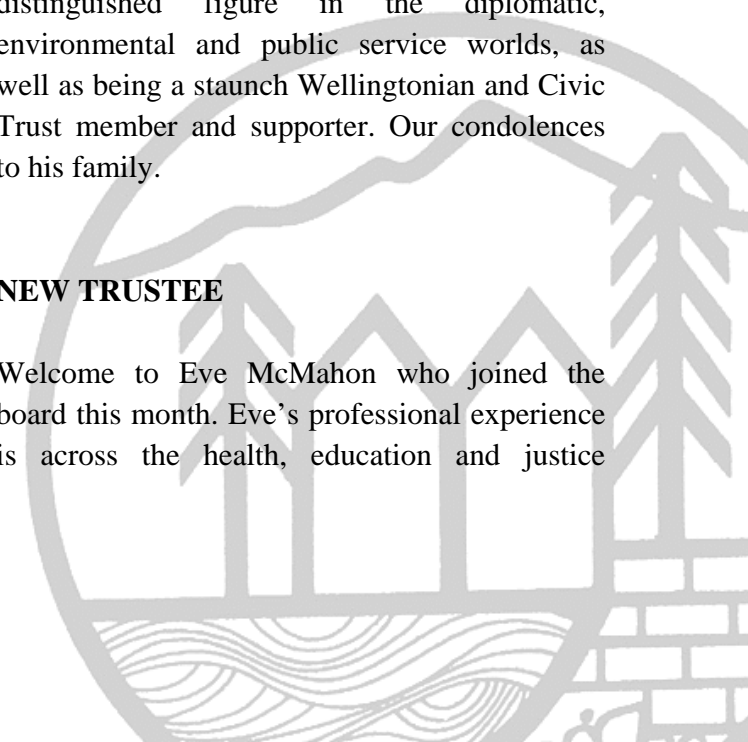
We ranged over a number of issues facing us (our Wellington CT, being a mere 33 years old, is by far the youngest of the group) and agreed that there was real practical value in strengthening our links and build relationships with similar groups across the country. This will not be a talk-fest but a practical strategy to help each other and to make the best use for each community of our collective skills.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE KEN PIDDINGTON

Former Trustee Ken Piddington died in a tragic road accident on 28th February. Ken was a distinguished figure in the diplomatic, environmental and public service worlds, as well as being a staunch Wellingtonian and Civic Trust member and supporter. Our condolences to his family.

NEW TRUSTEE

Welcome to Eve McMahon who joined the board this month. Eve’s professional experience is across the health, education and justice



sectors. As a long standing resident she enjoys the cultural and recreational opportunities Wellington offers.

BILL TOOMATH, Honorary Life Member

Eminent Wellington architect W.A. (Bill) Toomath, a former Trustee, is in poor health and entered Mary Potter Hospice on 13th March. The very best wishes go to Lola and to the family at this trying time.

GET INVOLVED!

The Wellington Civic Trust always welcomes both new and returning members so if you are interested in contributing, or know somebody else who might be, then go to the Wellington Civic Trust website to find out how to get involved:

<http://www.wellingtoncivictrust.org/get-involved>

WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST – BOARD TRUSTEES 2013/14

- Chairman: Alan Smith
Deputy Chair: Toni Izzard
Treasurer: David Tai (and Membership Secretary)
Secretary: Vacant
Other Trustees Bill Robertson, Craig Palmer, Liz Mellish, Mike Mellor, Bruce Stokell, Jonathan Suggate, Gerald Blunt, Duncan Joiner, Murray Thessman, Jim McMahon, Maurice Clark, and Eve McMahon.

This *Newsletter* compiled by Alan Smith and formatted by Bruce Stokell and Jonathan Suggate, March 2014. Further details from secretary@wellingtoncivictrust.org or ph. 027-285-6304

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