



WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST

Newsletter No. 2 June 2014

This is the second 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>

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Trustees have again done me the honour of appointing me as chairman for the next financial year. I will aim to live up to that role and look forward to working productively with all members and supporters. The board is a team of great talents and it's a pleasure to be working with them.

Internally, we will work to update the 1981 constitution to reflect current realities of how organizations like ours work in the internet age; and to reflect other changes in local government law, charitable trusts and so on.

Externally, there are some big issues for Wellington we'll be working on: I'm thinking here especially of the Waterfront, the town Belt, seismic strengthening, roads of National significance, and the RMA.

Collectively, building our relationships with other Civic Trusts and with comparable organizations should help ensure that we don't

become too inward/looking and remain open to new ideas and perspectives.

Does this all sound a bit dull? No, it's not - Wellington is a great place and the Civic Trust is a useful forum for public debate and for raising public interest.

Onwards!

Alan Smith



The 2014 AGM was held recently in the **Pukeahu National War Memorial Park** site offices.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Sylvia Allan is a Fellow of, and former President of, the NZ Planning Institute. She is currently an independent planning consultant with her own firm, and prior to that was for 12 years the national planning team leader for MWH NZ Ltd.

“Having lived in Wellington for just over 35 years, I can put my hand on my heart and say it is one of the few cities I know which has got better and better over that time. I have closely observed the regeneration of the inner city and the waterfront, the development of the Civic Square, the building of Te Papa. It has all happened in a thoughtful and measured way, but also in a way that is often serendipitous and quirky, unexpectedly adding richness to everyone's experiences of the city.”



New board member Sylvia Allan captured this picture of the much loved **Wellington Waterfront** as she came into work recently. It speaks for itself.

Clive Anstey's background is in environmental planning, management and design. After a degree in zoology at Vic, forestry school in Aberdeen and post grad Landscape Planning and Design at Lincoln, he was with the Forest

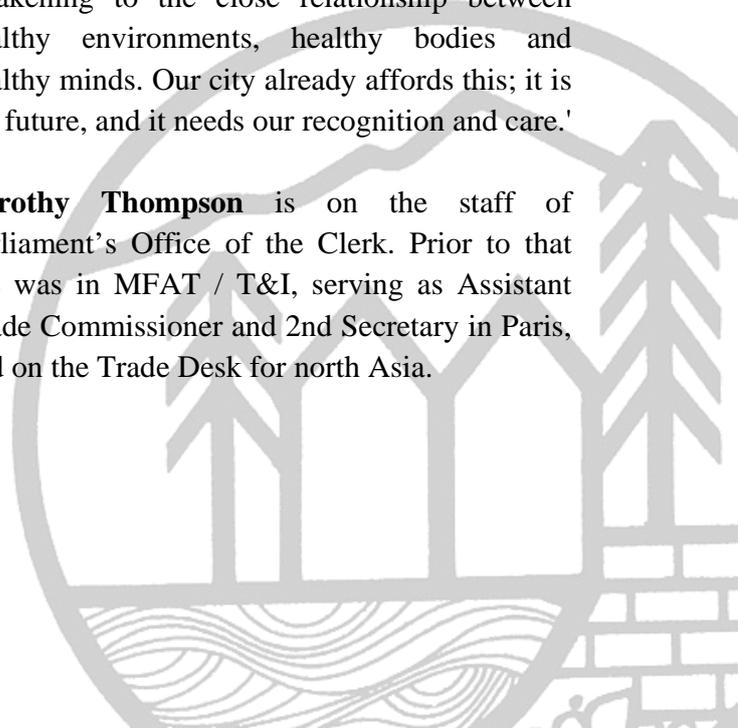
Service, then a Regional Manager for the Ministry of Forestry before moving to DOC to become national planning manager. He set up his own consultancy in the late 1990's, spending many hours in the environment court. He has been a certified commissioner since 2005

"Wellington is a wonderful place. The relationship between the 'cultural' and the 'natural', the 'built' and the 'unbuilt' environments defines our city in a very special way. The city, and in fact our whole region, is blessed with vast areas of public open space and an expansive coast line.

While easy to imagine the city as the outcome of some 'grand design', in fact the ever evolving patterns reflect the shifting values and aspirations of engaged citizens, public officials, and developers. There has long been a lively tension between the advocates for public open space retention and those wishing to expand the built environment.

Our readily accessible public open space and the hugely diverse natural world with which our living and working environments so intimately relate makes wellington a model for healthy living in a sustaining future. There is a global awakening to the close relationship between healthy environments, healthy bodies and healthy minds. Our city already affords this; it is the future, and it needs our recognition and care.'

Dorothy Thompson is on the staff of Parliament's Office of the Clerk. Prior to that she was in MFAT / T&I, serving as Assistant Trade Commissioner and 2nd Secretary in Paris, and on the Trade Desk for north Asia.



AND RETURNING ONES...

Gerald Blunt runs his own consultancy “Urban Matters” and was previously an urban design professional with Wellington City Council

Maurice Clark has a record of achievement in the Wellington commercial construction and heritage refurbishment scene. He is the owner of McKee Fehl Constructors Ltd and his projects have included the old Government Buildings (VUW Law School), Tower Insurance, Stout St Departmental and Old Public Trust buildings.

Toni Izzard holds tertiary qualifications in law, resource management, geography, governance, management and business. She has held planning roles in Northland, Tauranga and Auckland. From 2000-2006 she was Chief Complaints Investigator for ACC, and is now the Manager of Disputes Resolution at EQC.

Duncan Joiner is Chief Architect in the Department of Building & Housing. Before that he was Professor of Design and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Massey University’s College of Design, Fine Arts and Music. He has 35 years’ experience in public and private architecture practice, and was a Trustee 1985 to 1994 and Chairman 1992 to 1994.

Eve McMahon joined the Board in 2014 and her professional experience is across the health, education and justice sectors. As a long standing resident she enjoys the cultural and recreational opportunities Wellington offers.

Jim McMahon, who literally “jumped ship” on his arrival here in 1972, part-owns Caravel

Group (NZ) Ltd, a management consulting company. He has held ownership positions in other Wellington-based companies that have developed and sold innovative equipment and software projects around the world. Jim enjoys the recreational and cultural opportunities offered by Wellington and is keen for the city to maintain its unique environment and character.

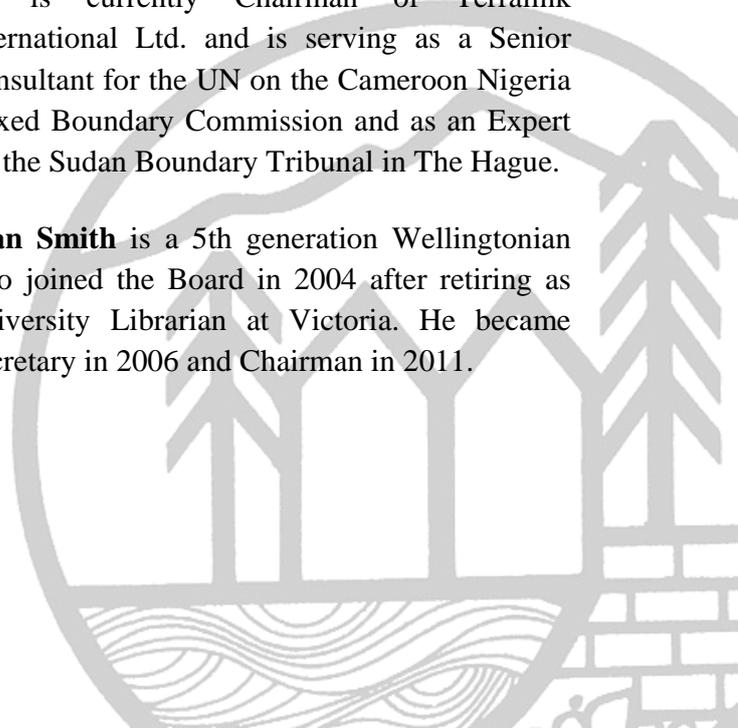
Mike Mellor has worked in transport in the UK and New Zealand for 35 years. He is currently the Environmental Sustainability representative on the Wellington Regional Transport Committee, and amongst other things Executive Office of the Rail Heritage Trust of NZ and Deputy Chair of the IPENZ Wellington Engineering Heritage Chapter.

Liz Mellish joined the Board in 2010. Liz has a resource management background and is a Trustee of the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust.

Craig Palmer is involved with the Mt Victoria Residents’ Assn. He was NZ Vice-Consul in Toronto, and is also a foundation committee member of the Friends of the Town Belt.

Bill Robertson was Director General of DOSLI. He is currently Chairman of Terralink International Ltd. and is serving as a Senior Consultant for the UN on the Cameroon Nigeria Mixed Boundary Commission and as an Expert for the Sudan Boundary Tribunal in The Hague.

Alan Smith is a 5th generation Wellingtonian who joined the Board in 2004 after retiring as University Librarian at Victoria. He became Secretary in 2006 and Chairman in 2011.



Bruce Stokell has lived in Wellington continuously for the past 40 years. He is enjoying using his experience in working with national recreation, sport and arts organisations to help the Civic Trust to keep the city a fine place to live.

Jonathan Suggate joined the Board in 2012. A long-time Wellingtonian, and University of Canterbury graduate in engineering, Jonathan is currently Commercial Manager of Pioneer Generation.

David Tai is a professional engineer with experience in managing Victoria University's property section and capital works for prisons. He is an honorary trustee of the Asian Events Trust and has also been President of the Wellington Xiamen Association and has also been President and Secretary of both the local branch and the national body of the NZ Chinese Association. David became Civic Trust Treasurer in early 2010.

Murray Thessman is a graduate engineer working in professional consultancy especially in the area of energy use.

SUBMISSION ON BUILDINGS (EARTHQUAKE PRONE) AMENDMENT BILL

The Trust made a submission to the Select Committee on this Bill. Our earlier Committee work on analysing the report of the Royal Commission on the Canterbury Earthquakes, and our response to the comprehensive questionnaire from the Ministry of Building, Innovation and Employment provided good back ground knowledge to inform our

submission. We were also able to assist the Auckland Civic Trust in identifying the factors built into the NZ Standard 1170.5 which provides for uniform risk across NZ in relation to their distance from seismic areas. Many thanks to Win Clark for his sound and patient advice.

The Trust emphasised the importance of all Territorial Authorities (TAs) having a specified target for both assessing and strengthening commercial buildings. Although there has been an awareness of the dangers of earthquakes for many years, building assessment and strengthening has been spasmodic in most TAs. The current average of 28 years for assessment indicates the lack of priority being given under the present system. We supported the setting of the timelines as outlined in the Bill.

We noted that the work of the Wellington City Council (WCC) is more indicative of a TA which has taken earthquake risk seriously. We believe that the Bill should recognise the need for TAs to develop a culture of strengthening beyond the minimum standards and refer to important historical and aesthetic factors. This would require rates relief, and waiving or reduction of consent fees during the process of building strengthening.

We submitted that the exemption from disability access and fire is not warranted as the provision in the existing Act for "as near as reasonably practical" provides the flexibility needed for TAs to exercise discretion. The costs and work involved in upgrading disability access and fire standards can vary widely and the blanket exemption will introduce long term human rights issues for the disabled and fire danger for

all. However the regulations need to give TAs guidance on the application of this provision for flexibility so that full advantage is taken of the intention of this wording.

We were concerned that although the Bill assumes market forces will provide the incentives for strengthening the market is far too immature to do this. For this reason we see the need for Central Government in this Bill to provide instruments to lift the strengthening of buildings above the low minimum of 33%. This would require inter alia allowing strengthening costs as expenses for income tax purposes and relief from fees applying to new work such as BRANZ levies.

In the case of registered “Heritage” buildings, the Bill provides at s.133AO a time extension as the only relief for the owner. A building only becomes “registered heritage” when it is judged, under law (Resource Management Act and Historic Places Act), to have some public benefit beyond its owner’s present purposes, both for the wider community, and over time. The Bill is silent on why the private owner should bear all the costs of securing these intended public benefits. Our paras 4 and 6 above offer practical suggestions for maintaining the current building stock in good order. The express public benefits of registered heritage buildings warrant a clear expression in the Bill of the contribution of some public money beyond a simple (cost-less) time extension.

We submitted that an across the board application of the 33% can lead to critical weaknesses in key structural items. We recommended that the assessment of the Code

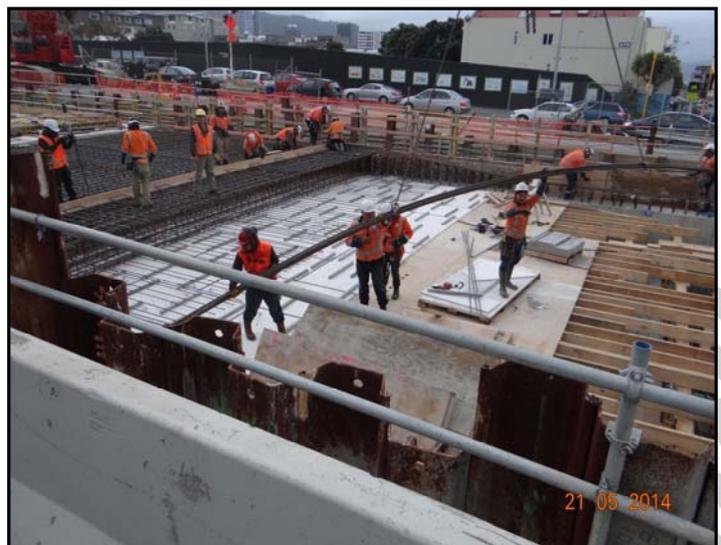
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be weighted to ensure that critical matters of structural strength or peripheral danger within a single building are given due significance. S.123A provides for “parts of buildings” but our intent relates to particular features of a building e.g. chimneys or stairs.

We noted that the seismic risk of the building site has ignored the influence ground conditions and locality has on the total seismic risk related to buildings. We recommend that the Bill include provisions to require that ground conditions and seismic risk of the locality are independently evaluated before a TA can issue resource consent (as is currently happening in the TC3 and Port Hills zones in Christchurch).

PUKEAHU NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL PARK

This picture shows the various construction phases of the tunnel roof that will be landscaped to form the park.



On the right of the photo are joists supported by an array of props, then there is a cover of something like plywood, and further to the left

can be seen the workmen tying together the reinforcing steel – a lot of it!!

In due course concrete will be poured over the steel, and one can just make out the finished concrete in the far left. This work is level with Tory Street. Pukeahu was the original name of the Mount Cook area.

JUMPING BACK INTO ACTION?



This popular and innovative jump platform on Taranaki wharf was closed last year because of the poor quality of the water. An engineering study has since led to the fitting of a plastic baffle which allows introduced fresh water to sit on top of the sea water. (remember form 3 science?) A period of observation has detected a much lower level of contamination, and explorations are continuing on ways of eliminating all pathogens so that the platform may open again.

TOWN BELT TO RECEIVE GREATER PROTECTION?

An historic moment in the long history of the Wellington Town Belt is presently being played out. At the time that members read this

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newsletter, the Wellington City Council will be considering submissions from the public on a proposed parliamentary statute that will govern the protection and management of Wellington's highly valued Town Belt.

Hopefully, an improved version of the current draft will be introduced into the House as a Local Bill before the Parliament is prorogued in advance of September's general election.

The Civic Trust has made a submission suggesting that greater weight be given to upholding the original 1839 ideals rather than favouring administrative convenience and flexibility. In particular, the Trust advocates an explicit exclusion of commercial ventures on the Town Belt, with the sole exception being temporary facilities that support a special event.

Among other improvements, the Trust advocates a provision that would enable Wellingtonians to challenge a decision made by the Council by appealing to an independent authority, which is yet to be nominated.

A further suggested improvement is for the statute to require City Councillors as Trustees to appoint a senior Council manager as the Curator of the Town Belt. It is envisaged that this would enable the public to have a readily identifiable contact person who would refer their enquiries to the range of senior managers with responsibility for protecting and managing the Town Belt. Councillors and senior Council managers are opposed to having this provision on the grounds that no one person should have exclusive responsibility for the Town Belt. This is again an example of the current draft statute having a discernible intra-institutional

perspective rather than viewing the Council from the public's point of view, in other words from the outside looking in.

Civic Trust members are encouraged to discuss the Town Belt and the proposed statute with their family, friends, and colleagues. One point to emphasise is that the 1873 Trust Deed makes it clear that the City Council is not the owner. Rather, the current Councillors are Trustees under the Deed and are charged with protecting and managing the Town Belt for the citizens of Wellington, who are under law the beneficial owners.

Those who have access to City Councillors and Members of Parliament are encouraged to raise the Civic Trust's suggestions and concerns with them.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT PLAN

The Trust has made submissions on the Regional Council's Draft Passenger Transport Plan. It is generally in support of a simpler network of higher-frequency core routes, but with reservations.

These include that the proposal to abandon the trolleybus network does not appear to be fully thought through; insufficient attention is paid to interchanges; there are no proposals to address unreliability on services such as to Karori and Khandallah; larger buses are proposed for many routes with no indication of how they will fit in to Wellington's streets; many peak-time services are proposed to have shorter hours; off-peak trains will still be infrequent; and some suburbs will require two changes to get to the hospital or Victoria University.

So it's good in parts - we hope the council listens, because otherwise opportunities to create a system that is an asset to the city and the region may be lost.

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

<u>Chairman:</u>	Alan Smith
<u>Deputy Chair:</u>	Toni Izzard
<u>Treasurer:</u>	David Tai (and Membership Secretary)
<u>Secretary:</u>	Dorothy Thompson
<u>Other Trustees</u>	Bill Robertson, Craig Palmer, Liz Mellish, Mike Mellor, Bruce Stokell, Jonathan Suggate, Gerald Blunt, Duncan Joiner, Murray Thessman, Jim McMahon, Maurice Clark, Eve McMahon, Sylvia Allan and Clive Anstey.

This *Newsletter* is written by Board Members and compiled by Bruce Stokell and Jonathan Suggate, June 2014. Further details from secretary@wellingtoncivictrust.org or ph. 027-285-6304

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