



WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST

Newsletter No. 4 December 2014

This is the fourth 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

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE CIVIC TRUST

All Trustees join me in wishing all members, friends and supporters of the Wellington Civic Trust warm Season's Greetings. Thank you for your interest and support during 2014 - and we look forward to further interesting progress and collective working in 2015. Clearly the pending changes to the RMA, and to regional local government structures, will provide challenging context. Building our synergies with the other Civic Trusts and comparable entities around New Zealand - on which good foundation work was done in 2014 - from the basis of our refreshed Constitution promise many opportunities - and a lot of work! We believe that it is all worth it for the sake of our place, Wellington.

Alan Smith

2015 CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

The Wellington Civic Trust is welcoming ideas and expressions of interest for its 2015 awards.

Details page 6 and on:

<http://www.wellingtoncivictrust.org>

AVENUES AND OASES, SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014 – OUR 2014 SEMINAR

This year we decided to run as a half-day (Saturday morning) event with free entry - a contribution to an ongoing civic conversation rather than trying to round the topic up into resolutions. Many thanks to Jim McMahon (Convener) and his team for all their work on Avenues & Oases. Our website will shortly hold the record of what was said and shown; in

the New Year we will confirm whether or not to make any hard-copy record available. Here are extracts from Jim's summary:

Walkability seen as important distinguishing characteristic for the capital

Containment and walkability are defining characteristics of Wellington that should be protected, promoted and enhanced according to the 80 participants at the Wellington Civic Trust's recent seminar exploring ideas on the future shape of the eastern Te Aro area from Taranaki Street to the bottom of Mt Victoria.

The Mayor, Celia Wade-Brown opened with her address extolling the city as the country's capital, the key initiatives in place to reinforce its role as custodian of national symbols such as the Cenotaph redevelopment, and its walkability.

Alongside that was seen to be a need to create user-friendly public spaces. "Sheltered, courtyard places that are warm, intimate and people-friendly," said keynote speaker Gaylene Preston. The award-winning filmmaker said she sees herself as part of a growing number of people who can work from anywhere and therefore choose a place that provides a lifestyle they enjoy. "That's Wellington," she said.

Victoria University, who sponsored the Pipitea Campus (Rutherford House venue), now has 21,000 students and a growing presence in the inner city, and is similarly interested in attracting staff and students to the capital. "Why would the best university staff and their families want to be located in Wellington?" asked Chancellor Ian McKinnon. His answer stressed the "fantastic advantages" the city

offers in terms of its compactness with easy accessibility to services and the importance of central government and national facilities such as Archives and Te Papa.

The importance for Wellington of reconciling national goals and perspectives with local landscape and community aspirations was emphasised by Lewis Holden, Chief Executive of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, who talked about how the new National War Memorial Park, currently under development, aimed to do exactly that.

The preservation of natural areas as the "living tissue" of the city and the places where people want to meet was stressed by landscape architect Martin Bryant, from Victoria's School of Architecture. Wellington City Council's Senior Urban Designer, Simon van Wijnen spoke on the Victoria Street transformation currently underway to improve pedestrian comfort and public domain quality, in the context of the Central City Framework.

Paul Young from Generation Zero explored the changing demographics underpinning increasing inner city population densities and corresponding demand for shared spaces, transport and amenities. His evidence of decreasing dependence on private cars for economic and environmental reasons was supported by Isabella Cawthorn with a theme that transport should advance the city and not be an end in itself.

Chris Bennewith, Associate Professor of Design at Massey University highlighted Wellington as a canvas for performing arts, with his "Lux" light show supporting business, attracting

tourists and enhancing the urban environment. Jeff Kennedy reinforced the need to provide attractive spaces where people could meet and relax with friends, with the example of his recently opened Prefab restaurant on Jessie St., purpose-built with this objective.

Civic Trust Chair Alan Smith said the need to ensure Wellington is a pedestrian friendly city was a key theme that emerged at the seminar. With the inner city population growing and demand increasing for inner city apartments, the City Council has identified Kent and Cambridge Terraces to Taranaki Street as a key site for development. We will now take the message to the Council that redevelopment of the area should focus on connecting the Basin Reserve to the harbour, re-establishing connections from Mt Victoria into the central city, and creating people-friendly access ways and sitting spaces. "We were delighted at the response to the seminar and the thoughtful, engaged and creative ideas and discussion that emerged."

TONI IZZARD ON WELLINGTON

Board Member Toni Izzard tells what she likes about Wellington.

Most nights I take the Number 20 Mt Vic bus home. There are three stops where I can disembark, depending on the weather.

The first is the longest walk home and is a good choice on low wind days. It involves wandering along the road, mostly without footpaths, and with the most spectacular view of the harbour all the way to Petone. Along the way there are plants which have populated various banks and cuttings, so throughout the seasons I 'scrump'

freesias, jasmine, bluebells and Shasta daisies.

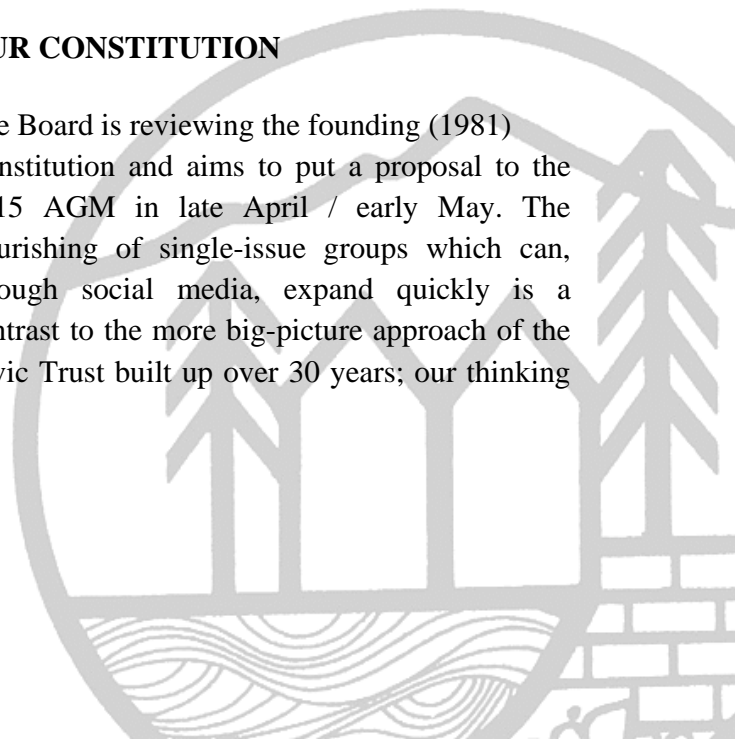
The second is the middle stop, and is a good choice on blustery northerly days. I walk down a steep path to a 'secret' reserve which opens to splendid views of Evans Bay, the airport and Cook Strait. I often stop to admire the waves hitting various reefs at the outer reaches of Lyall Bay. I then drop down through a zig-zag path, heavily bushed and well-populated with tui, little grey bush warblers, fantails, blackbirds and thrushes.

The last stop is near the top of Mt Vic, and is the preference when it is raining or blowing a gale, particularly from the south. This is a double zig-zag route, mostly through the bush with the same plethora of birds. The rain drips through the trees, and the wind screams so loudly through the radio mast at the top of the hill that I can hear it all the way to the bottom.

I frequently silently thank the City Council for the well-maintained pathways, and for their casual maintenance of the little reserve which allows the grass to grow long and wild between cuts. It's just great to live in a City with little oases of bush and flowers and birds and views, which provide such a balm at the end of a working day. That's why I love Welly.

OUR CONSTITUTION

The Board is reviewing the founding (1981) Constitution and aims to put a proposal to the 2015 AGM in late April / early May. The flourishing of single-issue groups which can, through social media, expand quickly is a contrast to the more big-picture approach of the Civic Trust built up over 30 years; our thinking



is to reframe the objectives along these lines:

- to promote the liveability and prosperity of Wellington so that its built and natural environment become a better place for the use, benefit and enjoyment of all
- stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of W and its dignity as the capital city
- support the promotion of high standards in architecture, landscape management, building, urban design, transport and other visible infrastructure
- provide a forum for citizens to gather and give free and frank expression to their feelings about and aspirations for Wellington.

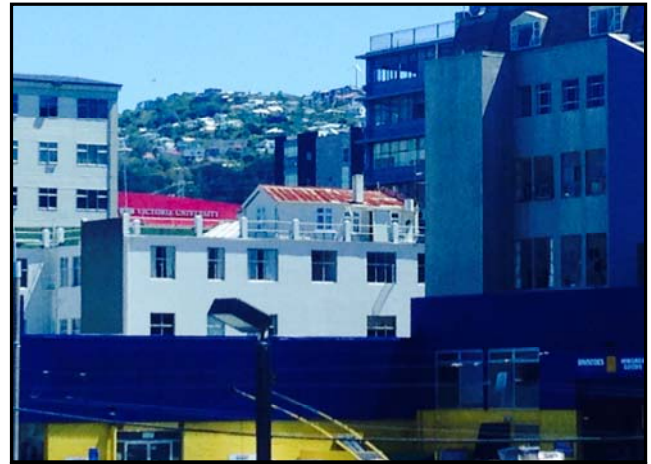
The other main changes are around:

- “Wellington” the place rather than “City of Wellington” the administrative unit
- removal of dated or sexist wording more emphasis on the “Forum” role.
- more emphasis on building supporters than building paid membership
- smaller Board of 8-10 rather than current prescribed 15-20.

WATERFRONT

The developer of Kumutoto sites 9 & 10 (opposite the NZ Post Building) is now applying for resource consent - comments close on 18/12.

The long-awaited Chinese Garden was announced during the November visit of the President of China. It will be interesting to see more details and how this will evolve.



Can anyone recognise this iconic Wellington cottage?

WAR MEMORIAL PARK

It’s now less than 100 working days until this is completed. We expressed concern that the orderly completion of the project was at risk from the dereliction of, and uncertainty about, the brick GHQ building (see photos in our last newsletter) which is part of the Park’s backdrop. So it was good to have confirmed from the Minister of Defence on 1 December that NZDF “will ensure that the GHQ building is in a presentable condition before the opening of the Memorial Park..... the intent is for the site to become a Reserves and Recruiting Centre for the NZ Defence Force, which should bring life to the Memorial Park and its neighbourhood” - which could be interpreted as an intention to do something different with the GHQ’s site after ANZAC Day 2015. Our Civic Trust’s main interest remains focused on after the emotion of its formal opening next year - how the park will operate, how it will evolve and how it will link with all the other Capital City attributes of Wellington. So that will include keeping an eye on ensuring that the GHQ continues to form an active part of the new Park’s setting.

HARCOURTS / T&G BUILDING

A successful outcome, with the owner deciding not to appeal against the Environment Court's November decision to uphold the refusal of consent to its demolition - a long-running courtroom saga. This was indeed a precedent case and congratulations to Heritage NZ for its advocacy leadership.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Local Government Commission's draft decision was released on 4 December: combining the present 9 councils in the region into one, with local "boards" with real resources and powers at the second level. Next steps include time for submissions closing March 2015, further considerations, possibly a referendum - it will continue to be long-running saga, but at least there is some focus to the debate now. It is of direct relevance to the Civic Trust's purpose and objectives for the quality, prosperity and liveability of Wellington. In summary, our position has been:

This all about realising the potential of Wellington. So leadership is the key to making this work - not dominance, but that best mix of the practical and the visionary.

This potential will be wasted if current activities slow or freeze while energies divert into management games of restructuring and of all staff having to reapply for their own jobs; followed by corny efficiencies like imposing standard flower beds across every park between Heretaunga and Houghton Bay.

With just half a million people, Wellington is

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still a small place in Australasian terms. It needs a single political leader and champion to represent us in national affairs; and a blend of local democracy plus operational agility relevant to today's wired-up world. The present mayors have failed the first test of collaboration by not all coming together to review regional governance. Any agreements in principle reached in recent years by the Mayoral Forum falter from the lack of 'binding powers' in the law.

Whatever the arrangements, the Civic Trust wants to see Wellington's status as *the national capital* protected and strengthened. Any new arrangements should strive to ensure that Wellington remains, as they say - *the coolest little capital in the world*, a distinctive attribute in which all citizens of this relatively small urban area can take pride and to which they feel a sense of affiliation.

To the Commission, The Civic Trust supported change on these terms:

- 5.1. no more than two tiers;
- 5.2. one rating authority;
- 5.3. administrative and operational overheads will be rationalised enough to ease pressure on rates – allowing that there will inevitably be 'winners' and 'losers' in the process of 'equalising' the rating base;
- 5.4. subsidiarity will guide the allocation of functions between tiers; what is best done locally should be done locally, and local democracy is to be enhanced through the new governance structures.
- 5.5. resource sharing between the overarching council and elected local boards

will be commensurate with the division of powers and responsibilities. Either there are local boards or there are not; there should be, and they should be able and equipped to act.

- 5.6. the Mayor will be elected ‘at large’;
- 5.7. Maori representation will be negotiated to the satisfaction of tangata whenua;
- 5.8. if Wairarapa forms a unitary authority, help will be provided to refinance the debt;
- 5.9. CCO’s are not to be created where the service provided is a public good and a natural monopoly. i.e., the ‘three waters’ and public transport.

Finally, we want to emphasize that these decisions should not be framed just by factors of economic efficiency or of competitive pressures. Wellington is a distinctive place because of its geography, its history, and its role as the national capital. Newtown is as different from Naenae as both are from Plimmerton or Pinehaven – but residents of each are all part of “Wellington” as seen from elsewhere. Local diversity of community within this Wellington deserves to be celebrated - this can be achieved by a better balance of local and regional powers and functions than the present arrangements, which have shown, by actual example, that they are incapable of being sustained.

CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

A pattern has built up of a Seminar one year alternating with an Awards Programme the next. That makes 2015 a likely year for this and we need a volunteer to pick up this idea and to develop it. The Board is open to any ideas; there are many architectural and design awards programmes around, so what is the best niche

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which the Civic Trust can fill? One theme, for example, might be around the July 2015 “Open House” programme being developed to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Wellington as the Capital City. Please think about it.; expressions of interest are welcomed.

REGIONAL COUNCIL NATURAL RESOURCES DRAFT PLAN

This includes coastal matters and our submission noted the possibility of further reclamations being mooted for both the airport and for CentrePort at Kaiwharawhara. The full submission is up on the website at www.wellingtoncivictrust.org

On other "Open Spaces" matters, we now await the introduction of the Town Belt Bill into Parliament in 2015 (as local, “non-controversial” measure). Our submission to the WCC Suburban Reserves Management plan in December 2014 congratulated the Council on producing such comprehensive and informative document. We commented that while the Draft Plan clearly recognised the contribution of community groups (e.g. Trelissick Park group), their ongoing relationship with council officers and resource allocation mechanisms was unclear; it is a 2-way relationship and not the sloughing-off of public responsibilities on to volunteers. We have urged that the relationship, and potential overlap, between the RMA and the Reserves Act be dealt with openly and clearly. Our submission is up on our website and we look forward to speaking to it at the oral hearings stage in March 2015.



Life members, board members and some contributors to the work of the trust held a picnic at Pauatahanui last weekend to celebrate a full year

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>

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL
AT THE WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST.**

WELLINGTON CIVIC TRUST – BOARD TRUSTEES 2014/15

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Deputy Chair: Toni Izzard
Treasurer: David Tai (and Membership Secretary)
Secretary: Dorothy Thompson
Other Trustees 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, December 2014. Further details from secretary@wellingtoncivictrust.org or ph. 027-285-6304

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