

OUR WORK including new projects for 2008/09

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Our urban development work includes enhancing the waterfront and city and suburban centres, developing public spaces such as urban parks and squares, looking after heritage sites, assessing and issuing building and resource consents, ensuring earthquake-prone buildings are strengthened, and planning for the city's future development.

The significant growth expected in Wellington over the next 20 years creates some challenges. We're aiming to respond to those challenges in ways that are sustainable and preserve the city's special character.

A key priority through to 2009 and beyond is to improve land use and transport by focusing development along a 'growth spine' stretching from Johnsonville in the north, to the central city, and Newtown and Kilbirnie in the south. Other priorities include improving the way we manage infill development in residential areas, and improving the quality of the city's urban design.

New project: promotion of sustainable building

Significant amounts of energy are used in the city's homes and buildings – to run appliances, heat water, and provide lighting and heating. Many buildings would benefit from design features such as better insulation, solar water heating, and better design to make use of the sun's warmth.

To promote sustainable design and building:

- We're employing an eco-design advisor to provide free advice on ways to make buildings more energy efficient and sustainable.
- We're offsetting building consent fees for new and retrofitted residential dwellings that make use of sustainable building features including solar or heat pump water heating, wood pellet stoves with 'wetbacks', and micro electricity generation.

New project: heritage patent slip

The 17-tonne, 4.5 metre cog was the main driving wheel at the former Evans Bay patent slip, which was Wellington's main ship maintenance facility from 1872 until it closed in the early 1970s. When the slip was closed in 1985, the cog was mounted on a concrete pad, where it remained until it was removed for the recent redevelopment of Cog Park.

Now that redevelopment of the park is complete, we will restore the cog and mount it on a concrete-and-wood platform – displaying the cog in a way that will give an impression of how it would have looked in use.

New project: earthquake-prone buildings

For the past two years, we have been assessing older buildings in the city and taking steps to deal with those identified as earthquake-prone – for example, by requiring owners to carry out strengthening work. This work is legally required, and involves assessment by engineers, liaison with building owners, and sometimes efforts to enforce requirements to bring buildings up to appropriate safety standards.

This year, we're increasing our budget for assessing and dealing with earthquake-prone buildings.

New project: resource consent fees waiver on heritage buildings

Heritage buildings add to the city's character. Preserving them makes a difference to the city's appearance and to our sense of identity as Wellingtonians.

Heritage buildings are listed in our District Plan, which places restrictions on demolition, renovation and other changes that might affect the building's heritage value.

To encourage restoration of heritage buildings, we already provide grants to developers and others to ensure that heritage buildings and assets contribute to the city's character.

Starting this year, we will also waive some resource consent fees on listed heritage buildings. This initiative acknowledges that protecting a heritage building by listing it in the District Plan can impose costs on building owners by restricting what they can do with the building.

New project: planning and resource consents

The District Plan contains restrictions on building and land use in the city. These restrictions aim to prevent environmental harm, ensure developments are appropriate for their surroundings (for example, buildings don't breach height restrictions), and protect neighbours from adverse effects such as noise or water runoff.

In 2008/09, we're increasing staff numbers in our planning team, so that we can better inform residents about resource consent applicants on neighbouring properties, and so that we can improve monitoring of property owners' compliance with resource consent conditions.

We are also budgeting for increased legal costs associated with changes to District Plan requirements and to appeals against resource consent decisions.

New project: anti-graffiti squad

In 2007/08, we trialled an anti-graffiti squad tasked with eliminating graffiti from the city's public spaces and, if owners consent, also from private property facing public areas. The squad also had the job of making certain areas unattractive for graffiti, for example by installing murals. We have committed to extending the trial through 2008/09 before making a decision about whether to make the anti-graffiti squad a permanent service.

TRANSPORT

We look after 670km of streets and roads, as well as footpaths, cycle lanes, traffic signals, car parks and so on.

We also: support public transport through bus priority measures such as bus lanes, letting buses go first at traffic lights, and providing bus shelters; work suburb by suburb to improve traffic safety; and plan to ensure the city's transport network meets future needs.

Our transport system is generally performing well – Wellington's streets are safe by national standards, we're relatively high users of public transport, and most residents believe the city is easy to get around.

However, we do face challenges such as ensuring the transport network can keep up with growing demand, and reducing harmful environmental effects such as noise, water and air pollution.

For the period to 2009, key priorities include managing demand on the transport network, advocating for investment in the city's state highway network, further developing our bus priority measures, and improving access to the port and ferry terminals.

New project: household travel survey

One effective way of reducing Wellington's carbon emissions and roading congestion is to shift from private cars to other forms of transport, such as buses, trains, cycles, and walking. Though Wellingtonians are already high users of public transport by national standards, almost half of us still use our cars to get to work.

To encourage greater use of other forms of transport, we first need to understand the reasons for Wellingtonians' current transport choices and what barriers there might be to change. We're planning to gather this information through a comprehensive survey, which will inform our long-term planning on transport including efforts to encourage cycling and walking.

New project: access to Hataitai Park

We are planning several changes to improve access to and through Hataitai Park. The changes include: traffic lights and pedestrian access at the main entry at the intersection of Ruahine and Goa Streets, a reconfigured roading network within the park, and increased parking. The proposals will make the park more accessible for walkers/cyclists and for public transport, and reduce traffic congestion within the park.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We work to attract major events such as the World of WearableArt Awards and the International Sevens. We also fund tourism promotions, and support attractions such as Te Papa and conference venues such as the Wellington Convention Centre.

To support businesses, we provide free weekend parking in the city and advocate for the city's interests to central and regional government and to regional economic development agency Grow Wellington.

Key economic development challenges are to make the city more internationally competitive, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and lift Wellington's sustainable economic growth.

The key priority for the period to 2009 is to strengthen the city's status as a centre of creativity and innovation.

New project: high-speed broadband

High-speed broadband is essential infrastructure for any city that aspires to provide world class services to its businesses and residents. The Council has adopted a vision of making high-speed broadband available throughout the city by 2012.

The Government also aims to support improved broadband and, in its 2008 Budget, provided \$500 million to support urban broadband projects. In 2008/09, we will carry out planning and feasibility work to develop options for supporting the development of high-speed broadband throughout the region, possibly including a regional application for government support.

New project: online tourism marketing

People spend more and more time online, and are increasingly likely to use online sources when they're making travel decisions and buying tickets. We've budgeted additional funding for Positively Wellington Tourism to step up its online presence, turning its website – www.wellingtonnz.com – from a static site to a fully interactive experience where users can research, plan and book trips to Wellington and interact online with other visitors to the city.

The project includes a new online booking system, clearer links between www.wellingtonnz.com and other Wellington tourism websites, and new content and applications to integrate the site with online social media.

We are also increasing Positively Wellington Tourism funding to provide for increased staffing costs and trustee fees.

ENVIRONMENT

We look after the city's 34+ square kilometres of reserve land, as well as beaches, coastline, and botanical gardens. We fund the Zoo and the Karori Sanctuary.

We also: provide water supply, stormwater and sewage disposal; provide recycling and waste disposal services; offer grants for environmental initiatives; run the Kiwi Point Quarry; and promote energy efficiency and sustainability.

The environment is by far our biggest area of spending.

Though Wellington enjoys a stunning natural environment, we also face some significant challenges. Like other cities, we need to find ways of becoming more sustainable – to address broad issues such as climate change – by producing fewer greenhouse gas emissions, dumping less waste, using resources such as water and energy more efficiently, and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.

Over the period to 2009, key priorities include promoting water and energy efficiency, improving protection of streams, developing a coherent plan to address biodiversity issues, and strengthening our partnerships with stakeholders to increase environmental awareness, community participation, and the achievement of environmental goals.

New project: Karori Sanctuary visitor centre

The Karori Sanctuary is planning a new 'Gateway' incorporating a visitor and education centre, shop, café and conservation displays. The centre, to be funded through Council and government loans, has been delayed by more than two years – partly because it took the Sanctuary longer than expected to secure government funding for the project, and partly because design work for the centre was held up when a geotechnical survey found unexpected issues with the stability of a bank behind the site.

The 'gateway' will provide the Sanctuary with additional revenue. The delay means the Sanctuary needs operational funding to sustain its current operations until the gateway opens. We are providing this 'bridging' funding over the next two years.

New project: pest and weed control

Our Biodiversity Action Plan aims to protect and enhance biodiversity by providing habitat for native plants and bird life, restoring and preserving streams and other ecosystems, and planting.

A key part of this work is our Pest Management Plan – in which we work to get rid of weeds and pest animals such as possums, rabbits, and goats and ferrets from key native ecosystems and other areas of land across the city. In this work, we are supported by the efforts of thousands of community volunteers.

We've committed additional funding to implement the Pest Management Plan, protecting native plants and wildlife, and reducing the risk that we'll need to carry out costly restoration work and remedial weed and pest control in future years.

New project: micro wind farm at Southern Landfill

Carey's Gully, the site of the Southern Landfill, has potential as a wind farm for several reasons. The site has a similar wind profile to the Brooklyn wind turbine. There is electricity transmission infrastructure in the gully, and private sector interest in building a wind farm there. And wind technology has developed to a point where it is not only environmentally sustainable but also cost-effective way to generate electricity.

During 2008/09, we will carry out a feasibility study to determine whether a wind farm is technically and commercially viable, and would comply with planning and other laws, as well as determining who should own and operate it.

New project: converting sewage into LPG or electricity

The Council late last year decided not to continue to compost sewage sludge at the Southern Landfill. Reasons included smell from the composting plant, cost, lack of market for the compost, and the emergence of new and potentially more sustainable ways to deal with the sludge.

We're now planning to investigate options for future disposal of sewage sludge. Installing a bioreactor plant to convert sewage to electricity or LPG is one of the options that will be considered. Another is a joint Wellington-Porirua sewage drying plant.

CULTURAL WELL-BEING

We fund the city's popular art galleries and museums, operate Toi Poneke – the Wellington Arts Centre, and support the NZ International Arts Festival, the St James Theatre and the NZ Symphony Orchestra.

We also provide cultural grants, support community events and festivals, and run the City Archives.

Wellington's arts and culture scene is thriving. Our key goal is to maintain this strength, and to ensure that all Wellingtonians can participate in the city's cultural life.

Over the period to 2009, our key priorities include: protecting and enhancing local 'sense of place'; enhancing the area at the top of the Cable Car; strengthening our partnerships with arts organisations; and engaging more effectively with grass-roots arts and culture communities.

New project: National Arts Festival for Children

Capital E's National Arts Festival for Children, held every two years, is a fortnight-long programme of dance, drama, music, story-telling, puppet theatre, circus and more.

Since it was first held in 2003, the festival has become an integral part of Wellington's arts calendar. Last year, it attracted a total audience of 38,000.

Despite its popularity, the festival is not currently part of Capital E's core programme. Capital E therefore does not have any ongoing funding to run it.

We have committed to provide ongoing funding for the festival. The majority of the festival's \$450,000 annual budget will come from other sources including box office, community grants/sponsorship, and Creative New Zealand grants.

SOCIAL AND RECREATION

We provide homes for people whose needs are not met by state housing or the private housing market, fund projects to help homeless people, support community organisations, and provide community centres and halls.

We also work to protect public health and safety through projects such as monitoring the city centre, banning liquor consumption in public in parts of the city, licensing food and liquor outlets, animal control, regulating other public health risks, providing toilets and cemeteries, and preparing the city to deal with emergencies such as earthquakes.

Our recreation work includes: providing libraries, playgrounds, swimming pools, recreation centres, sports fields and marinas; running recreation programmes; and reducing the costs of using sport and recreation facilities for people who have community services cards.

Key challenges include providing for a population that is growing in size and diversity, and catering for a wider range of recreation activities.

Over the period to 2009, priorities include increasing the value of community facilities to their communities, promoting social cohesion and sound social infrastructure, and promoting participation in sport and recreation, particularly for youth.

New project: City safety and Courtenay Place

We have committed to a five-year vision for Courtenay Place and surrounding streets, which will improve safety and address alcohol-related issues while helping the precinct to continue as the city's premier entertainment district.

The vision includes: a wider range of venues and more outdoor café seating; and a streetscape which accommodates late-night crowds while also providing for daytime and evening activities such as dining, movies, street theatre, live music and markets; and steps to address safety issues and reduce alcohol-related harm.

Specific plans include:

- A 24/7 central city liquor ban
- more Walkwise officers at key times
- installation of three new closed circuit TV cameras in Courtenay Place and two in other parts of the central city
- upgraded street lighting
- a late-night taxi stand and queuing system
- summer concerts in Courtenay Place Park
- redevelopment, over the next few years, of the Courtenay Place streetscape
- implementation of bus priority measures.

New proposal: Nairnville Park artificial surface

Nairnville Park is a recreation 'hub' for northern Wellington with three sports fields, a recreation centre, playground, skateboard ramp and netball court. High levels of use have harmed the turf on the sports fields: in the past two seasons, fields have had to close a number of times to allow turf to recover.

In 2008/09, we will install artificial turf on the park's upper sports field. Installing artificial turf will:

- allow use to increase significantly
- allow for use in all weathers
- provide a better quality playing surface
- be cost effective – despite the installation costs, artificial turf costs less per hour of use than natural turf
- help protect other Nairnville fields from over-use
- enable the recreation centre to provide new programmes.

New project: Basin Reserve practice wicket

The Basin Reserve is one of the country's premier test cricket grounds. We have agreed to consider providing funding support in 2009/10 to help the Basin Reserve Trust build 11 practice wickets at the south-western corner of the ground, behind the Sir Ron Brierley Pavilion. While off-site practice wickets are not currently required at test cricket grounds, it is likely they will be required in future.

Building these practice wickets will allow players to practice while a match is in progress, and enhance the main field (where outdoor practice wickets are currently located).

New project: Pasifika Arts Festival

We held the inaugural Absolutely Positively Pasifika Festival in February 2008. The festival acknowledges the important contribution Wellington's Pacific people make to the city's vibrant community life and the success of the festival has prompted calls for it to be held annually. We have committed funding to make the Absolutely Positively Pasifika Festival to be an annual event.

New project: a new floor for Thistle Hall

The first floor of Thistle Hall on Cuba Street needs to be replaced to bring it up to appropriate safety standards. The hall has high levels of public use for dance, tai chi and other activities. Along with a new floor, we will carry out other changes to comply with the Building Act, including installation of a lift and toilets.

GOVERNANCE

Our governance work includes running local elections, holding meetings of the Council and its committees, producing policies and strategies to guide our work, seeking feedback on our proposals from members of the public, producing annual plans and annual reports to make ourselves accountable to residents, engaging with Maori and stakeholder groups, and providing information about our services and activities.

The key challenges we face are to increase participation levels and build trust and confidence in civic decision-making.

Our priorities for the period to 2009 include improving the transparency and quality of processes for public involvement in civic decision-making, and increasing participation rates in democratic processes.

Review of our work programme

In the coming year, we'll undertake a comprehensive review of our work programme as we develop a new long-term plan for the city.

As part of this review, we'll be taking a fresh look at issues likely to face the city in the coming decade. We'll seek public views on our work and the city's future direction. And we'll ask for feedback on where to draw the line between providing high quality services and ensuring those services are affordable.

The long-term plan will set a general direction for 10 years and a detailed programme for three.