

Vegetation Management

(see also Objectives, Conservation and Land Management, page 6)

Introduction

The Town Belt is covered in a wide variety of vegetation types, from open sportsfields at the Berhampore Golf Links and Macalister Park to native bush in the Botanic Garden. However, most is a mix of coniferous and other exotic forest and/or native and exotic scrub. (See Figure 7). Together they make up the image we have of the Town Belt today.

The present vegetation must be accepted collectively as the starting point for the future vegetation and its management. The forest cover we have on the Town Belt today has taken many years, and a great deal of effort from early Wellingtonians, to develop. This forest environment, has been hard won and must be protected.

A forest is a living system and, as such, is constantly changing through natural processes. We should work with, not against, these processes to achieve not only a more ecologically sustainable result, but also one which will cost us less in the long run.

The artificial establishment of native forest on bare sites requires a major commitment in terms of labour and financial resources, because it is a slow process needing a lot of maintenance. However, in many areas of the Town Belt exotic forest and scrub cover now provides conditions in which native species are regenerating naturally, although, in some areas, regeneration is inhibited by invasive weeds. However, the diversity of mature native forest will not eventuate without intervention, due to the lack of seed sources for climax species in the existing environment.

Many introduced species, including conifers, grow more quickly and, therefore, require less maintenance and, consequently, fewer resources. The existing conifer forests will remain healthy for decades yet, but they are unlikely to regenerate on their own. Where continued exotic forest is desired, replanting will be necessary.

The successional processes already occurring, must be recognised and the existing environmental conditions and recreational requirements used to guide our choice of the most appropriate type of final forest cover to achieve the most efficient use of resources. We must also recognise that it is not an option to do nothing if we are to perpetuate the forest cover for we cannot presume that the forests of the Town Belt will be self sustaining. The presence of competitive weeds, the lack of seed sources for native forest species and the limited regeneration potential of most exotic trees demands active forest management.

We must also recognise that it is not only the forest trees which have a value. Shrubs, herbs and grasses have cultural, historical, economic and ecological importance. All species must be included in the management considerations.

The variety of vegetation types on the Town Belt offers a range of recreational and visual experiences which is valued by the people of Wellington. There are those who will argue for the creation of pure native forest cover, and those who prefer the open understorey of the coniferous forest. There is scope to accommodate a range of preferences. The landscape and microclimates are varied enough to carry variety in the vegetation cover and, as this is a public reserve, the desires of as many of the community as practicable should be accommodated.

The Need For Vegetation Management

The Town Belt vegetation has great potential for educating the public about natural processes (eg, regeneration and succession) and the need to manage the Town Belt forests. This would mean achieving multi-purpose forests designed and managed to meet conservation and education objectives whilst satisfying the recreational and aesthetic requirements of the city environment. The ultimate objective would be to establish and

maintain a balanced forest system within the confines of the city which would include both exotic and native forest types.

To achieve this a planned management regime is needed for every area of the Town Belt to replace the rather ad hoc approach which has been used this century. Very little planned planting has occurred in the last 30 years, and most of the early planting now requires decisions on its future.

Vegetation Management Strategies

Detailed vegetation management strategies for the management areas are set out in Part 2 of this Plan. The regime to be adopted for a given site depends upon the existing vegetation, site conditions, recreation use and landscape considerations.

Figure 8 shows, in broad terms, the proposed pattern of vegetation cover. It should be noted that this is a long-term objective to be gradually achieved by modifying the existing vegetation.

The comparative areas of the simplified vegetation types mapped in Figures 7 and 8 are set out in Appendix 6. This shows that native vegetation is to be established on a much greater proportion of the Town Belt than at the present time, providing a basic vegetation framework (60% of the proposed vegetation types compared to 20% of the existing vegetation.) This is a realistic approach within the timeframe of this plan (50-100 years), based upon experience of native revegetation work. It is to be developed from the existing areas of native regeneration, gradually replacing most areas of rank grass and exotic scrub and replacing significant areas of conifer forest (most notably, Tinakori Hill).

Within the native framework smaller stands of conifer forest are to be perpetuated as landmark features. The largest area to be retained in conifers and mixed conifer/eucalypt forest is on Mt Victoria, due to difficult site conditions, intense recreational use and visual considerations. (See Management Area 11, Part 2 of this Plan).

The areas of mixed woodland are based upon existing forest of this type where, most particularly, exotic broadleaf trees with a native understorey provide seasonal leaf change as a feature of interest.

It is also proposed that parts of the existing mown grassland be managed by less frequent mowing as perennial meadows to allow for seasonal flower displays.

It must be stressed that the success of the vegetation management strategies will depend upon preparation of detailed implementation programmes. Implementation does not simply constitute planting programmes but must make allowance for considerable allocation of resources for maintenance and monitoring. Competition from invasive weeds is a chronic problem on the Town Belt and will be an ongoing responsibility for both existing vegetation and new planting. As stated earlier, the vegetation is constantly changing by natural processes and further changes will result from the management regimes. It is essential that these dynamics are monitored and recorded as a reference source for the future. This should not only include records of planting and maintenance programmes but regular photographic records taken every five years from specific photograph points.

There is a need to establish, within Council, a staff position to deal specifically with the management of the Town Belt (see section on Staffing page 17) including the long-term implementation of the planned vegetation management.

"Conservation Sites" listed in the District Plan

There are 26 "conservation sites" listed in the District Plan. None of these falls within the existing Town Belt, but four are immediately adjacent to the its boundary: Tawatawa

Ridge; Tapu Te Ranga Marae; Karori Reservoir; and Polhill and Waimapihi Gullies.

Policies

- 1** To prepare an implementation plan for the vegetation management in each area, generally following the regimes set out in the specific Management Area policies in Part 2 of this Plan.
- 2** Council shall instigate a feasibility study into the establishment of a multi-disciplinary Town Belt Management Unit (see also under Staffing page 17) to manage the vegetation of the Town Belt.
- 3** To establish a programme of monitoring and recording changes occurring in the Town Belt vegetation as a reference source for future management and for public consultation.
- 4** To establish, maintain and protect vegetation appropriate to the uses and site conditions of the various areas of the Town Belt.
- 5** To protect all areas of vegetation from fire and invasive weeds.
- 6** Areas of the Town Belt adjacent to the "conservation sites", listed in the District Plan, will be managed to be compatible with and to acknowledge the existence of these sites.
- 7** To stabilise and restore those areas prone to erosion with appropriate management practices. This would usually mean adopting a revegetation programme rather than building a structural support.
- 8** Areas designated to be regenerated with native species shall have all wilding pine, macrocarpa and invasive exotic tree species such as sycamore removed.
- 9** To retain gorse/broom scrub to act as a nurse crop for regenerating native plants where a return to native forest is an objective. If peripheral areas cause an aesthetic or potential fire problem they should be overplanted with native shrubs.
- 10** Where areas are to be replanted with native or non-coniferous species, consideration will be given to using a preponderance of bird food species (eg. tree lucerne, Salix spp., oaks, Banksia spp., Grevillea spp, kowhai, puriri, tree fuchsia, rewarewa).
- 11** Where planting of native species is required the species shall be those native to the Wellington Ecological Region and shall be propagated from local seed or plant sources (eco-sourced).

Interpretation / Education

Despite the fact that the Town Belt lies on the doorstep of central Wellington, surprisingly few people know its extent, its history, the ecological lessons it can teach, or the recreational opportunities it offers.

The long, unmarked boundary and the complex topography of the Town Belt exacerbate this problem, but there has also been little effort made in the past to "interpret" the Town Belt to its users and potential users.

It is the intention of this management plan to address this situation. (See Objectives 5 & 18, pages 5 -6). Out of a better understanding and knowledge will grow a greater respect, and out of this respect will grow the motivation to preserve this priceless asset for future generations with the same wisdom and forethought that was demonstrated by the founders of Wellington who put the original tract of land aside "forever".

The value Wellingtonians place on the Town Belt will also be appreciated by visitors and tourists. We need to ensure that they are made aware of what the Town Belt has to offer.

To be able to walk through the "New Zealand bush" just minutes from the centre of the city is a feature which should be capitalised on.

Historic Interpretation

The whole of the Town Belt and its vegetation can be seen as an historic artefact embodying the cultural aspirations of the citizens of Wellington over the last 150 years. These unquantifiable factors and their associated ideas have shaped the Town Belt.

The history of sport in the late nineteenth century, as well as the expanding size of Wellington, decided where and when sportsfields were developed. New ideas for planting new species were tried on the Town Belt. Track systems developed in response to perceived needs which have changed over time.

An historic interpretation of the Town Belt is larger than a mere interpretation of the sites on it. However, site interpretation will need to be the focus of initial work.

Policies

- 1** Sites worthy of note in both Maori and European history shall be marked with appropriate signage.
- 2** Council shall investigate the best methods of providing comprehensive historical information on the Town Belt for citizens and visitors alike.
- 3** An inventory of historic sites and features on the Town Belt shall be compiled and legal protection sought where appropriate via the Historic Places Act and the District Plan.

Ecological Education

The ecological systems of the Town Belt have been heavily modified since human habitation began. However, there are many opportunities to set areas of the Town Belt aside for vegetation to regenerate, and this is addressed under "Vegetation Management". However, the ecology of an area encompasses all species existent in that area, irrespective of whether they be considered "weeds", "natives", "exotics", "desirable" or "undesirable". There is considerable value in being able to study the interaction of all species, including the impact of human activity.

(Note the District Plan states: "No activity shall be undertaken within 20m of a conservation site, where that activity involves any effect that may disrupt the ecology of the site.")

Policies

- 1** Interpretive information on the natural processes occurring on the Town Belt shall be supplied by way of signs and information brochures available from appropriate locations.
- 2** Local schools shall be encouraged to use the Town Belt for study projects.
- 3** Assistance from local communities shall be sought to help with revegetation projects and weed control or tree releasing in certain areas.

Maori Sites

Some important sites to the Maori people in Wellington have been included in the District Plan. Those which lie on the Town Belt are as follows:

- Moe-ra Kainga (bottom of Ohiro Rd above Maarama Cres.)
- Te Akatarewa pa (above the Mt Victoria tunnel)
- Matairangi/Tangi-te-keo (Mt Victoria)

- Omaroro cultivation area (behind Pearce St, off Connaught Tce)
- Nga Kumikumi clearing (north side of Brooklyn Rd. and Nairn St. intersection).
- Ahumairangi Ridge (parallel with Grant Road)
- Owhariu - Thorndon Track (north end of Tinakori Hill)

Policies

- 1 Any activity occurring on or near the sites listed above shall be discussed with the Tangata Whenua before any modifications are made.
- 2 Wellington City Council shall discuss ways to interpret and/or protect Maori sites with the Tangata Whenua.

Tourism

Wellington is today identified as a tourist destination in a way never thought of in the past. Tourism is the largest single foreign exchange industry in New Zealand, generating \$3.3 billion per year, an increase of 19% since 1992. Wellington is already among the five regions which benefit most from overseas tourism and the Wellington Tourist Board is investigating ways to increase its share of the growing tourist industry.

Arguably, the Town Belt is a forgotten legacy which has been undervalued. The Zoo and the Botanic Garden attract considerable visitor interest, but it is time to promote the merits of the whole of the Town Belt as an essential part of the 'Wellington Experience'. Its forested hillsides and undeveloped ridgetops are integral to the rugged beauty of Wellington's landscape, with numerous opportunities to experience and appreciate the visual contrasts that make Wellington a scenic destination.

Research by the New Zealand Tourism Board reveals that short bush walks rate high amongst the six most popular activities undertaken by overseas visitors. This alone makes the Town Belt a prime location for developing tourism. Its proximity to the central business district, its numerous access points and the variety of short, relatively easy walks through forest clearly provides opportunities that tourists are looking for.

Furthermore, there is potential to tap the growing popularity of 'ecotourism' by promoting the Town Belt as an urban ecosystem - a concept which encompasses the recreation, health and aesthetic needs of urban dwellers with principles of conservation and forest management.

Currently, visitor information relating to the Town Belt is fragmentary - focusing on the Botanic Garden and Zoo and the Northern and Southern Walkways (routes longer than tourists' preferred short walks). There is potential to promote the Town Belt in its entirety as a tourist attraction, stressing its importance in Wellington. A range of the preferred short walks and visitor focal points should be planned throughout with appropriate visitor facilities, linked in with visitor themes such as conservation, historic and scenic interpretation.

Specific opportunities for upgrading and extending walking opportunities, providing site-related visitor information and providing a range of environments are identified in the specific Management Area policies, in Part 2 of this Plan.

The Town Belt's tourist potential warrants serious investigation and formulation of a promotion strategy which would form the basis of Council planning and funding as well as opportunities for seeking sponsorship.

Policies

- 1 Council shall prepare a strategic tourism marketing plan for the Town Belt.

- 2 In the interim, Council shall promote the existing Town Belt facilities (eg, tracks, information, viewpoints) as part of the 'Wellington Experience' for visitors.
- 3 Tourist activities and the promotion of tourist activities shall not be detrimental to the informal, and natural character of the Town Belt.

The following part of this management plan describes the policies which will guide all aspects of the future of the Town Belt and provide a framework for continuity of management which this asset has not had before.

Administration

In order to protect the values of the Town Belt, as discussed above and acknowledged by the people of Wellington, a system of 'rules' is necessary to control the activities of a few who may impair the enjoyment of the place by the many. Rules also provide a framework for the uses and development which may take place. It is the Council's intention to keep such rules to a minimum and, wherever possible, to control activity, which needs to be controlled, by much more subtle means, such as good design of walkways and facilities, and the interpretation of features to increase public awareness and respect.

In addition to its role as Trustee over the Town Belt Council also has a responsibility under the Resource Management Act to control the adverse effects of activities on the environment. The Town Belt represents a significant resource for Wellington in terms of open space, recreation and amenity attributes.

Council's District Plan provides a further 'layer' of rules that relate to activities that may, if allowed by the management plan, be located on the Town Belt. These provisions are designed to protect the character of the area by complementing the intentions and policies of the original deed and the management plan. The District Plan provides a further opportunity for community involvement, both through the Plan notification process and through resource consent procedures.

This part of the management plan describes the intentions of Council for administration and management of the reserve. These intentions are in keeping with the over-riding requirement of the original Deed that the land must be kept forever as a "public recreation ground for the inhabitants of Wellington".

The funding and long term planning will always consider the Town Belt as a single entity, although the day to day work may be divided into tasks relevant to specific management zones. These will fall into either the "southern" or "central" areas as defined by Parks Department management, or by some other regime yet to be put in place (see section on 'Staffing').

Daily Management

Policies

- 1 To plan and carry out all the work necessary to maintain and enhance the environment and facilities of the Town Belt for public use and enjoyment according to the aims and objectives of this management plan (see pages 5 - 6).
- 2 To record all management actions taken to provide a resource of data for administrative, management and scientific purposes.

Staffing

At present the maintenance of the Town Belt lands falls to the staff of the Parks Department, Culture and Recreation Division of the Wellington City Council, namely the Managers of the Central and Southern Areas. Very little new planting development work was carried out during the last twenty or thirty years due to a lack of resources (and lack

of an adequate management plan). However, some planting work in association with community groups has occurred on an ad hoc basis.

This management plan describes a considerable number of policies which will need resources and staff to be realised.

It is essential that the responsibility for the direction and management of the Town Belt be clearly defined within the Culture and Recreation Division to ensure that resources are allocated and work programmed to put these policies in place. This would be a position which will focus solely on the management of the Town Belt. This person would have to have a relevant resource management background but be able to draw on additional skills and expertise from other areas of Council or engage consultants to provide these.

Policy

Council shall establish the position of a Town Belt manager whose responsibilities will focus solely on the management of the Town Belt.

Maori Partnership

Maori occupation and/or settlement of the Wellington district dates from approximately 950 AD. There are historic Maori sites on the Town Belt but Maori interest goes beyond this to wider issues of tinorangatiranga and kaitiakitanga in the management of Wellington's environment.

Policies

- 1 The Wellington City Council, in managing the Town Belt, will facilitate and enable the exercise of tinorangatiranga and kaitiakitanga by Wellington's tangata whenua.
- 2 The Wellington City Council shall consult with the community about Maori names and cultural information relating to features on the Town Belt which shall be incorporated into the management plan in subsequent amendments and reviews of the plan. This shall be in accordance with the Council's Policy for Naming Parks and Reserves and shall retain all existing Maori names.

Relationship to the District Plan

It is proposed that the Town Belt will be identified as a separate open space area in the new District Plan. The District Plan's policies, objectives and rules will relate to the Management Plan. The Management Plan states how the Council intends to use the powers given to it under the Deed and other legislation (see Legal Status section, page 8). The District Plan does not, and cannot, override these powers but must also be complied with if a resource consent is required for an activity approved under the management plan.

Any proposal to locate a new activity on the Town Belt will be assessed against the provisions of both the Town Belt Management Plan and the District Plan. It will only be permitted if it complies with the provisions of both Plans.

Policy

The Wellington City Council will ensure that any development of, or activity on, the Town Belt complies with the provisions of the Town Belt Deed and Management Plan and also the District Plan and the Resource Management Act 1991.

Public Consultation and Community Involvement

Protection of the Town Belt and its resources can only be achieved through the public exercising its rights and responsibilities of ownership. The onus is on the public to stand accountable for the future of this public asset. As the agent for the public the Council will facilitate this accountability. Therefore, there needs to be an easily understood procedure for public input into important decisions regarding Town Belt management.

The future of the Town Belt depends on the active involvement of the community as it did during the early period of development. Council resources are limited and the future work on the Town Belt depends heavily on the involvement of the public to ensure its success. Council officers and community groups need to work closely in organising projects which are in accord with the objectives of this management plan (see pages 5-6).

Policies

- 1** All decisions relating to the negotiation of fresh, renewed and new leases, licences, easements and long term concessions, which grant special rights over the use of Town Belt land, shall be publicly notified. Written submissions shall be invited but provision for public hearings shall be at the discretion of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority. Each case shall be decided on its merits according to the objectives and policies of the management plan, and taking account of the public submissions.
- 2** Applications for activities on the Town Belt which require resource consents shall be publicly notified where required by the Resource Management Act.
- 3** All matters to do with changes on the Town Belt requiring public notification (as above) shall be dealt with according to the provisions of Sections 119 and 120 of the Reserves Act, 1977 except that the notifications shall be published twice (instead of once) with a two week interval between. Council shall also consult with interested parties on matters which relate to the Town Belt.
- 4** A Town Belt Management Report shall be published annually to facilitate public accountability in decision making and implementation of the management plan.
- 5** Council shall assist with the establishment of a 'Friends of the Town Belt',
- 6** The active participation by the community and the Friends of the Town Belt, in the ongoing management, maintenance, development and monitoring of the Town Belt shall be encouraged.

Legal status

To ensure the retention of the existing status of the Town Belt as reserve, the remaining land of the Town Belt must be seen as sacrosanct in so far as it serves the purpose of the original Deed. (See Aim 1, page 5). It may be that, in resolving the problems of alienation and encroachment, some adjustments to the boundary will be made, but the spirit of the original Deed will be retained. The complexity and anomalies apparent in the land status investigation (Appendix 2) suggest there is a need for new legislation to regularise¹ those anomalies.

Where roads have divided the land in the past they have sometimes created small unworkable alienations where the land effectively functions as road reserve and Town Belt management policies are not necessarily appropriate. In some other instances, the actual road alignments differ significantly from the legal roads on land title documents. Special legislation will be required to regularise these anomalies as the practical solutions may require removal of small pockets of land from Town Belt and the reinstatement or addition of others.

Policies

- 1** To ensure the legal protection of the remaining Town Belt land.
- 2** Council will seek to have a Bill introduced to Parliament to regularise the legal status and unite the lands managed as Town Belt. The concepts being addressed in the Bill shall be notified for public comment. The public submissions shall be heard and reviewed by an independent commissioner.

Additions and Acquisitions

Land has been lost from the original Town Belt due to pressures from other uses. There has often been the misconception that reserve land is a "cheap option" for entrepreneurs looking for suitable central sites for new development under the guise of "recreation". Land taken for the Winter Show Buildings is an example of this. The error of this approach is now evident and the people of Wellington must look for ways to redress past mistakes.

Past policy of Wellington City Council was to try to regain the original boundary of the Town Belt. However, this is unrealistic considering the way the city has developed and instead the lost visual and physical continuity of the Town Belt should be regained. (See Objective 11, page 6). A number of areas are identified below as desirable additions to the present Town Belt. (See Background Report 5). Some of this land is owned by the Council and needs to be added to the Town Belt by regularising its legal status². Items (i), (ii), (iii), (v), (viii), (x), (xi) and (xii) include land that was originally Town Belt which, being relatively undeveloped, would be desirable to reinstate. The acquisition of other land which is privately owned, or owned by other public bodies, will need to be investigated.

- (i) The Telecom land, the Council-owned reserve land in Stellin Memorial Park, the Western Slopes Reserve and some privately-owned land below Stellin Memorial Park on Tinakori Hill (shown as 1a in Figure 4).
- (ii) The former Correspondence School site in Clifton Terrace, the western motorway edge from Bowen Street to Everton Terrace and the motorway reserve land below Kelburn Park (shown as 3a, 3b and 3c in Figure 4).
- (iii) Polhill Gully/George Denton Park (shown as 4a and 4b in Figure 4) most of which is held by Council as reserve or freehold land.
- (iv) Two undeveloped gullies adjacent to the Town Belt on the north side of Aro Street (shown as 4c in Figure 4).
- (v) Undeveloped land behind Te Aro School in upper Abel Smith Street (shown as 4d in Figure 4).
- (vi) Council owned land at the end of Epuni Street, behind and to the south of the Council's existing Epuni Street housing complex (shown as 5b in Figure 4).
- (vii) The gully between Coolidge Street and Connaught Terrace in Brooklyn (shown as 5a in Figure 4), some of which is also Council reserve land.
- (viii) Council-owned freehold land adjacent to the Macalister Park reservoir (6a in Figure 4).
- (ix) Areas of open space on the ridges flanking Island Bay including cliff areas facing Cook Strait (shown as 7a and 7b in Figure 4). Some of these areas are already held by Council in reserve.
- (x) Reserve land adjacent to Crawford Road (9b in Figure 4).
- (xi) The undeveloped land which was taken for Wellington Hospital, Wellington East Girls College, Wellington College and Government House (shown as 9a and 11a in Figure 4). Part of this latter property is now Council reserve land that was handed back to the city, free of charge, in 1982 and needs to be reinstated to Town Belt status.
- (xii) The 'Pleasure Ground' at the Mt Victoria Summit (11c in Figure 4).
- (xiii) The centennial memorial and area around the transmitter masts on Mt. Victoria. (11b in Figure 4).

(xiv) Point Jerningham.

Some specific policies in this plan relate to the above areas even though they are not yet Town Belt (eg. vegetation management proposals). These policies will be implemented as the land comes under Town Belt management as provided in policies 1 - 5 below.

Council also intends to seek the reinstatement of all former Town Belt land which is now owned by the Crown or a Crown agency, so that the land would legally become part of the Town Belt once more. This includes land occupied by Wellington Hospital (11d in Figure 4), Government House (11e in Figure 4), Wellington College and Wellington East Girls College (11f in Figure 4). Formal reinstatement would be mainly a matter of principle as the land would be leased back, for a nominal rental, to the current occupants for as long as the existing uses continued. However, an underlying Town Belt status (which does not exist at the moment) would prevent the uses from changing without recourse to the Council as Trustee, or the land from being disposed from public ownership without an Act of Parliament.

The above reinstatement would, in effect, be similar to that of the Wellington Show Grounds which are part of the Town Belt but where the provisions of the Town Belt Deed are suspended under the Wellington City Exhibition Grounds Act 1959. If that Act is repealed or the lease to the Show Association terminates the land will automatically return to Town Belt status subject to the Deed.

Policies

- 1** Council shall regularise to Town Belt status adjacent Council-owned land, or acquire land ¹, or the use of land ², adjacent to the Town Belt boundary as it becomes available and where it will contribute to the visual and physical continuity of the Town Belt, and extend its recreational usefulness.
- 2** To actively pursue the addition of Council-owned land or the acquisition of the other areas of land identified on pages 19 & 20 (i - xiv).
- 3** To initiate legislation to reinstate to the Town Belt all former Town Belt land which is owned by the Crown or a Crown agency with the condition that the land may be managed separately from this management plan for as long as the existing uses continue. This legislation shall be promoted at the same time as the Bill described in the section on Legal Status, policy 2 (page 19).
- 4** Where it is not possible to acquire adjacent land, approaches shall be made to the land owners and/or users, and other concerned authorities. Their active interest in the Town Belt will be encouraged and their co-operation and support over management practices on their own land will be sought to complement the recreational character and intrinsic values of the Town Belt. This might include negotiation of conservation or open space covenants over their land. These approaches will be by regular contact and education.
- 5** Every five years Council shall review progress with achieving the above additions to the Town Belt and, where additions have been made, will initiate special legislation to make them formally subject to the 1873 Deed.

Encroachments by Occupation

Over the years encroachments (see Appendix 7, Definitions), other than vehicle accesses, have created the alienation into private hands of 2.3253ha of original Town Belt land. This is contrary to the original Deed which intended for the land to be "for ever hereafter used and appropriated as a public recreation ground.." and, moreover, stated that the Council was not authorised to alienate or dispose of Town Belt land. The Council wishes to address this problem by endeavouring to regain lost land (see Objective 16, page 6) and preventing any more private encroachments from occurring by better marking and monitoring of the boundaries (see Objectives 10 & 17, page 6).

Policies

- 1 In accordance with the 1873 Deed no new private encroachments shall be permitted.
- 2 The Culture and Recreation Committee or a delegated sub-committee of Council will evaluate each of the existing identified encroachments and determine which of the following options should apply on a case by case basis, taking into account 2(i), (ii) and (iii).
 - (i) The adjacent owner who is encroaching shall be required within 12 months to remove whatever item or structure constitutes the encroachment to enable the land to be "returned" to Town Belt.
 - (ii) A lease or licence may be negotiated (see Leases, page 25) which shall have no automatic right of renewal on expiry. If the owner requests a new lease or license at the time of expiry, a decision will be made after considering the criteria in the flow chart (Figure 5).
 - (iii) In exceptional circumstances and only as a last resort, and subject to legislation to remove the land from the Town Belt, purchase of the encroached land at market value may be negotiated and the money specifically used towards purchasing additional land for the Town Belt.
- 3 The removal of all encroaching features is the responsibility of the adjacent owner concerned. If the owner fails to comply within the time specified the work shall be carried out by the Council after consultation with the owner and the owner will be charged for the work.
- 4 Where a lease or licence is negotiated for an encroachment all costs, including survey costs, associated in doing so shall be met by the lessee/licence holder.

The flow chart in Figure 5 underleaf indicates how each encroachment might be dealt with in terms of the above policies. The criteria to be used for deciding the outcomes are briefly explained below.

- (i) The effect on public recreational value is the first criterion as this reflects the intention of the 1873 Trust Deed for the Town Belt land to be used as a public recreation ground. This value may be reduced:
 - materially where the encroachment physically obstructs public access eg, a building or fence, or
 - non materially where the encroachment inhibits public use by appearing to be private land eg, a garden plot which looks like an extension of the adjoining property even though the land is not fenced off.
- (ii) (i) Reasons why the encroachment should not be terminated may be accepted on the basis of :
 - historic circumstances for structures built prior to 1920. In the case of some older adjacent properties parts of the house were built across the boundary or right up to the boundary so that removal of the encroachment would necessitate partial demolition of the house and/or significantly impair privacy and security for the occupants.
 - safety eg. a retaining structure has been built to stabilise land eg. a fence has been constructed as a safety barrier above a steep drop.
- (iii) Purchase of the encroached land. Where removal of the encroachment would have a major adverse effect on the property or the return of the encroached land would add little recreational or visual benefit to the Town Belt. Special legislation would be required in each instance to enable the Council to sell Town Belt land. Therefore, this option will only be exercised where it can be justified under public scrutiny by :
 - the circumstances of the case,

- the benefit of achieving a permanent solution, and
 - the benefit of replacing the encroachment with land of more use to the Town Belt.
- (iv) 'Botanical enhancements'. If the encroachment is a 'botanical' enhancement to the Town Belt (eg, tree planting) the Council may allow it to remain provided that public access is maintained (ie, public access is not discouraged nor prevented). There would be no formal right of occupation and responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of these areas would be negotiated.
- (v) Alternatives to the encroachment. The owner may be permitted an agreed period of time to pursue these if:
- the alternative(s) are costly, ie. immediate compliance would place a significant financial burden on the owner, or
 - the alternative(s) would be otherwise difficult to comply with. eg. removal of a structure would necessitate building an alternative structure which could take some time.
- (vi) Remote area. The area of Town Belt affected is not likely to be used by the general public, even on an infrequent basis.

Access Encroachments

This section deals with encroachments (see Appendix 7, Definitions) where adjacent property owners are using the Town Belt for private vehicle access to their properties. This is contrary to the Deed which states that the Council is prohibited from creating thoroughfares (see Appendix 7, Definitions) across the Town Belt. The Council wishes to address this problem by resolving the existing access encroachments and by preventing any more instances occurring of private vehicle access over the Town Belt.

Policies

- 1 In accordance with the 1873 Deed no new private encroachments shall be permitted.
- 2 The Culture and Recreation Committee or a delegated sub-committee of Council will evaluate each of the existing identified access encroachments and determine on a case by case basis which of the following options should apply.
 - (vi) The adjacent owner who is encroaching shall be required to terminate the private vehicle access after an agreed period of time.
 - (vii) An easement (see Appendix 7, Definitions) may be negotiated which may be personal to the existing owner, so that the benefit of the easement shall not run with the land. The easement will therefore not necessarily extend to any new owner of the adjoining land. Any new owner will have to apply for a fresh easement which will be considered in terms of the criteria in the flow chart (Figure 6).
 - (viii) In exceptional circumstances and only as a last resort, and subject to public notification and gazettal, the access may be made a legal road.
- 3 Where 2(i) above applies, removal of all encroaching features put in place by the adjacent owner is the responsibility of that owner. If the owner fails to comply within the specified time the work shall be carried out by the Council after consultation with the owner and the owner shall be charged for the work.
- 4 Where an easement is negotiated for an access encroachment all costs, including survey costs, associated in doing so shall be met by the easement holder.

- 5** Where the accessway is made a legal road the adjacent owner shall be required to meet all or a significant part of the cost depending upon the Council's interest in having the legal road for public use.

The flow chart in Figure 6 underleaf indicates how each access encroachment might be dealt with in terms of the above policies. The criteria to be used for deciding the outcomes are briefly explained below.

- (i)** Does the accessway intrude unreasonably into the Town Belt's recreational nature?
- (ii)** This relates to the degree to which the intrusion is unreasonable, bearing in mind the public nature of the Town Belt. The greater the degree of unreasonable intrusion the more likely the accessway could, in terms of its effect, amount to a thoroughfare. (See Appendix 7, Definitions). As noted on page 23 the Council is prohibited from creating thoroughfares over the Town Belt.
- (iii)** Is the access required for Town Belt or utility reasons? This is relevant in deciding whether the accessway should remain at all, whether or not it is used for private access.
- (iv)** Alternative access. If alternative access is available via other land the owner may be permitted an agreed period of time to pursue this if:
 - the alternative(s) are costly ie, immediate compliance would place a significant burden on the owner, or
 - the alternative(s) would be otherwise difficult to comply with, eg. obtaining a right of way or encroachment licence on other land which might take some time to finalise.

Alternative access includes both vehicle and pedestrian access. If a property has pedestrian access the Council is under no obligation to allow vehicle access as well.

- (v)** Reasons why vehicle access should not be terminated. Since private access over the Town Belt is contrary to the Deed continued use would only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. eg, the property has no legal frontage so that it would be landlocked if the Town Belt accessway was terminated.
- (vi)** Legalising the access. This would be a last resort option since legalising the accessway would be alienating land from the Town Belt. Council would consider the impact that the surfacing and kerbing requirements of a legal road would have upon the recreational nature of the Town Belt. In many locations, this treatment would be out of character and may have adverse consequences such as encouraging greater vehicle use and increased vehicle speeds.

Leases

This section relates to leases other than those granted for utilities. (For utility leases see Utilities section, 26).

The total area of leased land on the Town Belt can not exceed 100 acres (40.46856ha) according to the Wellington City Town Belt Reserves Act 1908. Currently there are 22.78acres (9.2173ha) leased to various clubs and organisations. Leasing decisions have been made on an ad hoc basis to date, largely driven by demand and with little thought given to the distribution of facilities according to need or environmental suitability.

Leasing is permitted to facilitate the public use of the reserve by providing for a wider range of facilities than would otherwise be available. Any granting of a lease, which in

effect gives private property rights over public land, must be tested against the purpose for which the Town Belt is

intended and the provisions of the Reserves Act legislation. Market rentals provide a return to the public for the use of the public land.

Lessees may raise mortgages on their leases of Town Belt land. This gives the lender an interest in the lease and, in the event of default, the lender may exercise the right to sell or take over the lease. The leases must, therefore, specify the permitted use or uses and types of organisations considered appropriate to ensure continued compliance with policy 1 below. This complex issue will be addressed more fully in the Culture and Recreation Division Standard Lease Policy which is under preparation. The standard lease policy, once approved, will reflect the requirements of the Town Belt Management Plan.

According to the Wellington City Reserves Act 1871, rental monies received were to be invested back into the Town Belt to improve the reserve. Separate accounting of income in this way has been outdated by present day accounting systems (see Funding, page 28), but in effect this requirement is being met as Council's expenditure on managing the Town Belt far exceeds the income derived from rentals.

Policies

The following policies apply to non-utility leases.

- 1** Future leases¹ of Town Belt land and facilities shall only be made where the activity undertaken by the organisation applying for the lease is consistent with the objectives of this management plan and, as such, complies with the following:
 - (ii)** The activity is primarily concerned with public recreation. Preference will be given to outdoor recreation, either active or passive.
 - (iii)** The activity is open for public participation. Clubs will be encouraged to allow casual play on their facilities or, at least, that their membership shall be open to all members of the public.
 - (iv)** The occupation by the lessee will not restrict public access across the land except during times of active use. Where existing clubs or community groups, by their very specialised nature, cannot permit this (eg, croquet or bowling greens) their tenancy will be allowed to continue until they wish to relinquish their lease.
 - (v)** The activity will not be detrimental to any of the other values of the Town Belt protected under this management plan.

The only exception to these conditions shall be where leases are required to remedy existing encroachments (see section on Encroachments by Occupation, page 21), or where leases are granted for utilities (see section on Utilities, page 26).

- 2** Terms of existing leases shall continue to operate until the leases expire. Fresh leases granted to existing lessees will be in the terms of these policies.
- 3** Council shall advertise for public submissions or objections on any new or fresh (see Appendix 7, Definitions) proposal to lease Town Belt land or to significantly alter the nature of the activity or facilities covered by an existing lease. Payment for the cost of advertising and legal processing shall be in terms of the Standard Lease Policy.
- 4** All leases shall comply with the Culture and Recreation Division Standard Lease Policy.
- 5** The term of the lease shall be for no more than 10 years, with annual rental review.
- 6** Market rentals, as set out in the Culture and Recreation Division Standard Lease Document, will be charged for these leases in conformity with the intentions of the

original Deed which were to achieve the "best or most improved rent". Differential rebates which may be granted where special circumstances apply are also set out in the Standard Lease Policy.

- 7 Rentals shall be charged on the basis of the area of land occupied exclusively by the club.
- 8 Signs may be erected, with the written permission of the Chief Executive of Wellington City Council or delegated authority. This will provide the name and logo of the lessee, the use of the premises and any contact phone numbers. (See also Signs and Advertising policies, page 35).
- 9 To ensure that, in granting ancillary liquor licences to sports clubs, the primary purpose of the reserve, as an area for outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of the public, is not compromised.
- 10 Leases shall be for a fixed term with no automatic right of renewal. Any fresh tenancies granted on expiry shall be subject to the above policies.

Utilities (See Appendix 7, Definitions)

The 1873 Deed made provision for the Town Belt to be used for 'purposes of public utility to the City of Wellington and the inhabitants thereof'. This does not mean that the utility must be in public ownership but it must provide an essential service to the public. All new utilities, and all replacements and upgradings of existing utilities, therefore, will be allowed on the Town Belt only where they are essential, all other practicable alternatives have been exhausted and the Council's specific conditions have been met (see policies below).

In assessing applications for the routings of privately owned utilities the Council will consider whether the private utility intrudes unreasonably into the public's recreational enjoyment of the Town Belt.

All existing and future public and private utilities crossing the Town Belt (above and below ground) need to be accurately mapped and documented. New utilities, replacement or upgrading of existing utilities, may be permitted by the granting of leases or easements providing the recreational nature of the Town Belt is not significantly disturbed or where the public benefits outweigh any adverse impacts on this recreational nature. By 'recreational nature' is meant such features as the openness, the greenness and the peaceful, informal character.

The topography of Wellington means that many private property owners adjoining the Town Belt must, because of contour, route their stormwater and sewer discharges across the Town Belt to connect into the main Council networks. It is appropriate that such connections be allowed with the written consent of Council as manager and trustee of the Town Belt, provided that the Town Belt is not adversely effected by the laying of the utility. A fee may be charged for this right and a bond will generally be required to ensure that the route of the service is restored to the Council's satisfaction. The connection between the dwelling and the Council's main piping network is a private drain so the property owner is responsible for any maintenance and repair costs. It is not intended that formal easements or leases be required for such utilities.

Policies

- 1 Easements or leases over Town Belt land may be granted for the purpose of allowing public and private utilities, provided that the utility is an essential service to the public, that it cannot reasonably be located elsewhere and provided that the impact on the recreational nature of the Town Belt is minimised by compliance with conditions 6 (i) -(v) below.
- 2 Easements shall be granted for utilities that are located underground in terms of Section 48 of the Reserves Act.

- 3** Leases shall be granted for utilities that are located on or above the ground and shall be for less than 20 years. This period shall include both the term of the current lease and the term of any right of renewal.
- 4** Subject to the ability of the Council to do so under relevant legislation concerning utilities, the Council shall negotiate a lease and charge a market rental for any existing installations on the Town Belt if the ownership of the utility service or any of its installations changes. (Existing utilities do not necessarily have easements and/or leases and Council cannot change this unless ownership changes.)
- 5** Market rentals shall be charged for utility leases and easements in conformity with the intentions of the original Deed which were to achieve the "best or most improved rent" and shall be reviewed every 5 years.
- 6** All new utilities and replacement or upgrading of existing utilities shall comply with the following conditions to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council.
 - (i)** The impact of all utilities on Town Belt land shall be minimised.
 - (ii)** All utility services shall be placed underground, except where it is not practicable to do so.
 - (iii)** Where practicable, underground services shall be sited to minimise interference with existing features, facilities and plants.
 - (iv)** Utility services shall be located so as not to restrict areas useable for outdoor activities or required for future facilities or tree planting.
 - (v)** Any disturbance of the existing site during installation of a utility shall be made good immediately after completion.
- 7** All costs arising from the application for a new utility or upgrading or replacement of an existing one shall be met by the applicant.
- 8** All public and private utilities crossing the Town Belt (above and below ground) shall be accurately mapped and documented with plans to be lodged with Council.
- 9** Where the Council has the legal prerogative to do so upon cessation of a utility to function, related services and structures shall be removed where it would improve the recreational value of the land and the site made good at the utility operator's expense. Where there is legislation which over-rides Council control of this (eg the Electricity Act 1992) Council shall apply to the appropriate authority for the related services and structures to be removed.
- 10** The Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority may grant written permission to adjoining property owners to lay private discharge utilities (such as stormwater and sewer pipes) through the Town Belt to connect into existing main piping networks subject to the following conditions:
 - (i)** no practicable alternative route is available;
 - (ii)** a fee for use of the route and a refundable site restoration bond, as determined by Council, shall be paid;
 - (iii)** the adjoining property owner shall be responsible for the accurate mapping of the connection(s) and shall provide documentation of this to Council;
 - (iv)** the property owner shall be responsible for any future maintenance and repairs of the private connection and shall be required to make good any site disturbance on the Town Belt to the Council's satisfaction. This includes any emergency works being undertaken without prior consent.

Funding

According to the Wellington City Reserves Act 1871, rental monies received from the leases of Town Belt land, and other income, were to be used to improve the facilities of the Town

Belt. For example, any revenue derived from the felling of any of the conifer forest could be used to fund new developmental planting.

However, in recent years Council has made many improvements in its financial accountability. Consequently, a separate account for Town Belt monies is no longer needed and it is intended that the 1871 legislation be amended to allow for present-day accounting procedures.

Currently, expenditure on the Town Belt far exceeds income derived from it (see Background Report 7). The provision of recreational facilities is one of the key objectives of Council and will take priority over maximising Council revenue.

Policies

- 1** Allocations for funding of work on the Town Belt will be made during the annual plan process in the same way as all other Council work is budgeted for.
- 2** Council shall seek to have a Bill introduced to Parliament to amend the Wellington City Reserves Act 1871 to permit Town Belt income to go into the Council's General Fund.
- 3** Until the 1871 legislation is amended income derived from the Town Belt shall be specifically accounted for as required by that legislation. Thereafter, Council's income from and expenditure on the Town Belt shall be reported annually.

Access

The notion of public access available for all is integral to the intent of the original Town Belt Deed. (See Objective 4, page 5). The emphasis has always been on pedestrian access, while vehicle access has been acknowledged as necessary for maintenance and service access to buildings. Therefore, all forms of motorised vehicles are excluded from Town Belt land except in designated parking areas (see Controls page 30). This principle will remain. However, the present day emphasis on equity of access is applicable. Designs for access-ways will ensure that disabled access to the Town Belt facilities is provided.

Policies

- 1** To maintain a practicable network of pedestrian and maintenance access-ways to service the facilities, amenities, utilities and special features of the Town Belt. This does not include providing access for any purpose other than servicing the Town Belt.
- 2** To assess the existing network of walking tracks to ensure it most appropriately serves current use patterns and that the tracks are not in conflict with conservation management objectives.
- 3** To develop some tracks of easy gradient accessible for disabled people.
- 4** To develop inter-linking circular walking routes where appropriate, subject to other objectives of this management plan.
- 5** To assess the need for new access points along the boundary and for connections to nearby track systems.
- 6** To remove tracks and revegetate areas where access is no longer required.

- 7 To continue a programme for upgrading walking tracks in order of priority based on usage and need.

Controls

It is Council's philosophy to achieve control in public spaces through good design and appropriate maintenance regimes rather than by using too many barriers and signs. Controls on people's behaviour are needed only where it may impinge on the enjoyment of the amenity by others. The desire for a peaceful remote atmosphere must be balanced against the needs of the active sports people. The best way of doing this is to separate the activities physically (eg. golf) or by timing (eg. control of special events).

Public Vehicle Access (see Appendix 7, Definitions)

Policies

- 1 All motorised vehicles (except emergency and authorised vehicles and those especially designed for off-road use by the disabled) must keep to designated roads or parking areas. (see Appendix 7, for definition of disabled vehicle).
- 2 Temporary vehicle access may be granted for specific finite purposes, and then terminated at the completion of the purpose. A bond shall be payable by the party seeking the access which shall only be refundable once any disturbance of the land, vegetation or other features has been made good to the satisfaction of the Council.
- 3 Existing formed car parks shall be retained at their present size, except where their existence is no longer required, in which case they will be removed or converted for appropriate pedestrian-only recreation use.
- 4 No additional formal car-parking space shall be constructed unless there is significant benefit for public recreation on the Town Belt and until all possible sites off the Town Belt have first been investigated and demonstrated not to be feasible.

Trailbikes and 3 and 4 Wheel All-Terrain Vehicles

Policy

Trailbikes and 3 and 4-wheel all-terrain vehicles are prohibited on the Town Belt unless authorised in writing by the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council or delegated authority for emergency or maintenance purposes.

Litter

Wellington City Council would like to promote the idea, as used by the Department of Conservation, that what you take into a reserve you also take out again. This approach is reinforced by actually removing rubbish bins instead of installing more.

Policies

- 1 To continue the current management practice which is to empty bins weekly, to check other areas on a regular basis and to assist any groups who wish to carry out "clean-ups".
- 2 To promote the litter "take home" policy and, where appropriate, remove unnecessary rubbish bins.

Dumping

Policy

Dumping is prohibited on the Town Belt and offenders shall be prosecuted under the City By-laws.

Firearms

Policy

The carrying or use of firearms, or any other dangerous instrument, within the Town Belt is prohibited (refer to the Bylaws), except where permitted within gun club premises or used for the maintenance or development of the Town Belt (such as pest control) as authorised in writing by the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council or delegated authority.

Mountain Bikes (including any non-motorised pedal cycle)

Council's Mountain Bike Policy shall form part of this management plan.

Policies

- 1** Under the Council's Mountain Bike Policy all areas of the Town Belt (except the Botanic Garden and Zoo) are open to mountain-bikes unless declared closed.

The closed areas are:

- Tinakori Hill: closed to mountain biking except for the ridge;
- Southern Walkway: from Oriental Bay to Palliser Road;
- Berhampore Golf Course;
- Kelburn Park exercise track.

- 2** Mountain bike usage on the Town Belt shall be monitored and those parts of the Mountain Bike Policy which relate to the Town Belt shall be reviewed from time to time under this management plan.

- 3** The areas that are closed to mountain bikes shall be clearly signposted to show this and the code of practice for bikes shall be included on Town Belt information boards (see Signs and Advertising section, page 35).

Skateboards and Rollerblades (including ultra-terrain skateboards)

Policy

Skateboards and rollerblades are permitted on Town Belt land (except for the Botanic Garden and Zoo) but may be excluded from specific areas at the discretion of the Chief Executive of Wellington City Council or delegated authority.

Golf

Policy

Golf, including practice golf, is prohibited on Town Belt land except within the boundaries of the Berhampore Golf Course.

Horses

The only organised horse club in the Wellington urban area is the Wellington Light Horse Club based at Houghton Bay. The club currently uses areas at the southern end of the

Town Belt (Mt Albert, Melrose Park). There have been no reports of conflicts arising from their use.

Policy

The Wellington Light Horse Club will be permitted to continue using the southern parts of the Town Belt.

Dogs

The aim of this management plan is to preserve the use of the Town Belt for all. This means that dog owners will be allowed the opportunity to exercise their pets on the Town Belt as long as this does not reduce the enjoyment of the reserve by others.

The Bylaws(1991) require dog-owners to be responsible for removing any fouling by their dogs in public places and for keeping their dogs on a leash at all times when in public places.

Policies

- 1** Dogs are permitted on the Town Belt but must be kept under control and/or held on a leash in accordance with the Bylaws (as above). Troublesome animals shall be impounded.
- 2** A feasibility study shall be carried out to look at areas which could be set aside for people to have their dogs off the leash as long as they are still under control.

Fire and Fireworks

Policy

Open fires or barbeques (except gas) or fireworks shall not be permitted on the Town Belt. Exceptions may be made when a fire or fireworks display is associated with a one-off major public event and has the written approval of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority, or, in the case of fire, is required for maintenance or development of the Town Belt as authorised by the delegated authority within the Council.

Camping

Policy

Camping is prohibited on the Town Belt unless expressly authorised in writing for educational purposes by the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority.

Parachuting/Parapenting/Hang-Gliding

Policy

Parachuting,parapenting or hang-gliding onto or out of Town Belt land is not permitted without prior written approval of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council or delegated authority.

Microlite Aircraft

Policy

Landing or taking off of microlite aircraft onto Town Belt land is not permitted without prior written approval of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority.

Special Events(Such as races or festivals).

Policy

Special events which will attract unusually large numbers of people to an area or areas on the Town Belt at a given time shall be permitted only with the prior written approval

of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority subject to such conditions and fees as are appropriate to the event.

Plants

Policy

The removal of living plant material from the Town Belt is prohibited except by authorised personnel.

Weeds

Of the many weed species on the Town Belt those listed in policy 1 below are the major weed problems at present in terms of localised or widespread competition with native vegetation amongst other factors. (See Background Report 1, Ecology for detailed assessment of weed problems.) In implementing a weed control programme the spread and threat of other species will be monitored and added to the priority list if necessary.

Policies

- 1** To undertake weed control against climbing asparagus, bindweed species, old man's beard, veldt grass, Eleagnus, Japanese honeysuckle, banana passionfruit, climbing dock, sycamore and wandering willy throughout the Town Belt. Other plants shall be added to this list as they present a problem in the future.
- 2** Weed control programmes shall comply with the requirements of the Noxious Plants Control Programme of the Wellington Regional Council.
- 3** The debris from all weed control work shall be removed from the Town Belt to prevent reinfestation.
- 4** The safety of the public shall be paramount when weed-spraying programmes are operating.

Possums

The degree of possum damage in Reserve areas in Wellington varies according to the vegetation cover. Little work had been done to quantify the problem until recently when Landcare Research were tasked with assessing 4 Wellington City Council reserves (Karori Reservoir, Trelissick Park, Khandallah Park and Otari) - none contiguous with the Town Belt. In the Botanic Garden successful bait stations have been set up. Where parts of the Town Belt are close to residential areas, bait stations with poison cubes can be installed, whereas in more remote areas, cyanide poisoning by a licensed operator would be more appropriate.

An ongoing assessment of the levels of damage in the respective management areas and their proximity to areas of sensitive vegetation will also be required as part of the programme.

Policy

- 1** To assess the impact of possums on Town Belt vegetation and identify where they are a problem.
- 2** To develop and fund a programme which includes on-going monitoring, in association with the Wellington Regional Council, for control of possums in those areas of the Town Belt where they are having an impact on the vegetation.

Firewood

Policies

- 1** Dead wood on the floor of exotic forest may be taken by the public for firewood (except in the Botanic Garden and the Zoo).

- 2 The use of chainsaws except for vegetation management purposes by Council is prohibited unless written permission is first obtained from the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority..

Structures and Furniture

The original intention of the New Zealand Company Secretary, who gave the instruction for the land for the Town Belt to be set aside, was that there should be no building allowed on this land. This instruction was not complied with. However, this management plan proposes to return to this intention wherever possible. Therefore, the necessity for all buildings and structures will be progressively reassessed. Where it is determined that they should be retained, they will, where necessary, be upgraded and altered so as to reduce their visual impact.

Policies

- 1 To allow sculpture, artwork, plaques and memorials where they are appropriate to the purpose of the Town Belt ie. relate in the broadest sense to recreation/conservation/ enjoyment of the outdoors. Exceptions may be made where existing features are considered to be historical artefacts.
- 2 Any structures, or items mentioned in policy 1, shall not detract from nor restrict, physically or visually, the area that is useable for access or outdoor recreation.
- 3 Seating, picnic tables, rubbish bins, play equipment and all other park furniture shall be placed with regard to need, orientation to sun, shelter from wind, views and proximity to access points. Care shall be taken to minimise visual distraction from the natural environment.
- 4 All furniture shall be designed and co-ordinated for suitability to function and appropriateness for the surroundings.
- 5 Colour schemes, planting and site design associated with existing buildings and structures shall be revised as each comes up for attention on the routine maintenance programme to ensure that their visual impact is minimised and that they are integrated with their surroundings. Where maintenance is the responsibility of lessees Council shall ensure that the required standards are stipulated in lease agreements as these come up for renewal and shall check regularly that the standards are met. Leases shall be revoked if these standards are not met.
- 6 New buildings or other structures will only be sited on the Town Belt if they are necessary for public recreation or essential utility purposes, all possible alternative sites have been assessed and rejected and when all relevant resource consents have been acquired. Proposals for any such building or structure shall be publicly notified.
- 7 No new building or structures of any kind will be permitted on the skylines, as viewed from the central city or from suburban centres. In exceptional circumstances, this policy shall not apply where buildings or structures are for essential utilities and cannot be practicably located elsewhere and their public benefits outweigh their adverse visual impacts.
- 8 Structures, buildings and furniture which are no longer required shall be removed as soon practicable, and those that are unsafe or irreparable shall be removed also and only replaced if the conditions of policy 6 above are met.
- 9 Custodian's houses shall be retained where a custodial presence is needed for maintenance and surveillance of adjacent Town Belt land. Where the custodial function is not required Council shall remove the houses as the opportunity arises.

Signs and Advertising

Signs are necessary for the users of the Town Belt to appropriately use and appreciate the reserve. These will take the form of maps, historical/interpretive material, and

identification and direction boards. The design of signs will be professionally prepared and be of a fitting and

co-ordinated style appropriate to the nature of the Town Belt. A unique logo will be developed for the Town Belt to be used on all signs to enable easy identification of diverse facilities.

It is seen as desirable for there to be a "family" of signs which are immediately recognisable as belonging to the Town Belt. Obviously, individual organisations leasing land on the Town Belt will wish to retain their own identity, but this should still be possible within broad guidelines of, perhaps, colour and style. Guidelines will provide suggestions rather than be mandatory.

Policies

- 1** A unique logo shall be developed for the Town Belt to be used on all signs as a means of ready identification of Town Belt land and facilities.
- 2** Guidelines for a co-ordinated style for signs appropriate to the nature of the Town Belt shall be prepared.
- 3** Where possible all information pertaining to one area shall be combined onto one signboard.
- 4** The areas that are closed to mountain bikes shall be clearly signposted to show this and the code of practice for bikes shall be included on the information boards in 3 above.
- 5** All signs shall be professionally prepared.
- 6** No signs or hoardings shall be permitted on Town Belt land which are not immediately relevant to the activities occurring on, or features of, the reserve. This includes election hoardings and any commercial advertising.
- 7** In general, the use of Town Belt land for advertising purposes shall be prohibited. However, existing and future sponsorship advertising relating to sportsfields shall only be permitted where:
 - within the sportsground concerned, the wording is only readable from within the sports area and the structure supporting the advertising is sited as unobtrusively as possible;
 - the name of the sponsor is incorporated into the external name signs for the building provided that these signs comply with size and style requirements set out in the sign guidelines.
 - (An organisation/person shall be considered a sponsor where funding is specifically provided for the sports activities involved, eg, funding competitions, team uniforms).
- 8** The Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority reserves the right to refuse permission for the display of any advertising material which may offend any section of the community.
- 9** Temporary signs relating to one-off special events shall be permitted with the prior written approval of the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council or delegated authority.

Commercial Use

There is a continuing pressure to allow commercial activities to occur on the Town Belt. Clear guidelines are needed to define this use. (See Objective 12, 6). A commercial use may be permitted where it would primarily assist the enjoyment of the Town Belt by the people of Wellington. (Under the 1873 Deed the Town Belt is to be a public recreation ground for the inhabitants of Wellington.)

Long term uses are dealt with in the section on leases. However, short term uses would usually be dealt with through concessions.

Policies

- 0** No long or short term commercial use shall be permitted on Town Belt land except where it facilitates outdoor/physical public recreational use and provides for a better appreciation by the public of the conservation and recreational qualities of the Town Belt. In this context 'public' means the people of Wellington.
- 1** Applications for privately or publicly-owned essential public utilities shall be considered under the provisions of the Utilities section (page26).
- 2** Any application for a lease or concession for a commercial activity which is not an essential public utility must be publicly advertised and go through a trial period, as set by Council, after which public submissions will again be sought if the operator seeks to continue the activity.
- 3** After the trial period the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority may grant a lease for the venture in terms of the lease provisions (page 25) provided that, following the public submissions, it is satisfied that the commercial activity complies with the conditions in 1 above and does not adversely affect public enjoyment of the Town Belt.
- 4** Provision of carparking for commercial gain shall not be permitted, except on a temporary basis inside designated areas to service a particular recreational activity, and shall be subject to the conditions in the section on Controls, Public Vehicle Access (page 30)
- 5** The payment of any application fees, advertising or legal costs associated with setting up a commercial use shall be made by the applicant.

Safety

Policies

- 1** To reduce any possible natural hazards where practicable and inform the public of any significant dangers they may encounter while on the Town Belt.
- 2** If necessary, Council shall restrict access to parts of the Town Belt for safety reasons when essential repairs are being made or when general public safety is threatened, eg. during tree-felling operations. Access may also be restricted when areas of sensitive vegetation need to be protected during phases of the revegetation process.
- 3** Walking tracks shall be kept clear of crowding undergrowth to ensure that the public perceive the tracks to be safe for use.

Applications to Use the Town Belt

Appendix 8 sets out the process that applicants are required to follow when seeking to use parts of the Town Belt for any medium to long term purposes.

Recreation

(see also Objectives, Public Recreation, page 5)

Wellington is blessed with an extensive and accessible recreational resource in its Town Belt. The variety of its topography and large land area can accommodate a wide range of recreational opportunities virtually at the back door of many Wellingtonians.

Historically, there was much emphasis upon the development of formal recreation facilities but current trends reveal the growing popularity of informal recreation. Public submissions indicated that the community now feels there is sufficient formal recreation on the Town Belt and that it should be reserved more for passive recreation in keeping with its informal character.

Council intends to recognise this general trend but must find out more about the specific recreational needs of user groups and adjacent communities and the availability of recreational opportunities. Certain uses have direct relevance to the local community (eg, playgrounds) but many of both the formal and informal recreational opportunities on the Town Belt attract use from the wider population. Recreational planning must consider the Town Belt in the context of the entire Wellington City area, taking into account all the reserve lands with their recreational opportunities which are distributed throughout the city. The Council has released for public comment, a draft recreation strategy for all of Wellington which includes the Town Belt. Specifically, recreation patterns on the Town Belt also need to be monitored and assessed to ensure compatibility of use and the ability of local environments to sustain usage levels. Planned and informed development of the Town Belt's recreation facilities is needed to encourage Wellingtonians to use and appreciate this unique asset.

Policies

- 1** To provide for informal recreational activities for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public, taking into account the ecological sensitivity of the Town Belt and its ability to sustain a particular use or an increase in use.
- 2** Emphasis shall be given to informal, (rather than formal) public recreation, and related maintenance and interpretation needs.
- 3** There shall be no additional land area developed for organised sports facilities on the Town Belt.
- 4** Community gardens may be permitted for approved community groups where the gardens will provide therapeutic benefits to people who do not have their own gardens or provide produce for charitable distribution. (Produce shall not be grown for sale.) The gardens must retain their public character, be compatible with adjacent uses and have no structures or fencing unless approved in writing by the Chief Executive, Wellington City Council, or delegated authority. These gardens shall only be permitted under short-term tenancies of up to three years and shall be publicly notified in accordance with Policy 1, Public Consultation and Community Involvement (page 18).
- 5** Provision for recreational use shall be planned to reduce any potential and existing conflict between different users.
- 6** Council shall seek better information on people's needs for informal recreation on the Town Belt.
- 7** Council shall explore ways of accommodating the needs of less frequent users of recreation facilities.
- 8** Walkway routes shall be rationalised to ensure easy, safe access for all sectors of the community, with an emphasis on well-marked, circular routes where appropriate.

- 9** Council shall develop a new walkway through the Town Belt from the Bolton Street Memorial Park to the Berhampore Golf Course, with the intention to eventually extend it out to the coast along the Tawatawa ridge on the west side of Island Bay (see item (ix), Additions and Acquisitions, page 20).
- 10** The Northern and Southern Walkways and the new walkway (see policy 9 above) shall be maintained to a high standard which will withstand concentrated year-round use.
- 11** The walkway system shall be accurately mapped and interpreted, and this information will be freely available to the community.
- 12** To encourage maximum sustainable use of all formal recreation facilities by intensifying the use of sports surfaces and ensuring the multiple use of ancillary facilities, such as clubrooms, to reduce the demand for additional facilities on the Town Belt.
- 13** Formal recreation facilities shall be maintained to their present standard.
- 14** Sportsgrounds shall be temporarily closed as soon as the surface is unable to sustain sporting use in order to prevent any damage to the reserve or the vegetation.
- 15** The Culture and Recreation Division Standard Leasing Policy shall be applied to all the recreational facilities leased to private groups and clubs (see under Leases pages 25 -26).

Vegetation Management

(see also Objectives, Conservation and Land Management, page 6)

Introduction

The Town Belt is covered in a wide variety of vegetation types, from open sportsfields at the Berhampore Golf Links and Macalister Park to native bush in the Botanic Garden. However, most is a mix of coniferous and other exotic forest and/or native and exotic scrub. (See Figure 7). Together they make up the image we have of the Town Belt today.

The present vegetation must be accepted collectively as the starting point for the future vegetation and its management. The forest cover we have on the Town Belt today has taken many years, and a great deal of effort from early Wellingtonians, to develop. This forest environment, has been hard won and must be protected.

A forest is a living system and, as such, is constantly changing through natural processes. We should work with, not against, these processes to achieve not only a more ecologically sustainable result, but also one which will cost us less in the long run.

The artificial establishment of native forest on bare sites requires a major commitment in terms of labour and financial resources, because it is a slow process needing a lot of maintenance. However, in many areas of the Town Belt exotic forest and scrub cover now provides conditions in which native species are regenerating naturally, although, in some areas, regeneration is inhibited by invasive weeds. However, the diversity of mature native forest will not eventuate without intervention, due to the lack of seed sources for climax species in the existing environment.

Many introduced species, including conifers, grow more quickly and, therefore, require less maintenance and, consequently, fewer resources. The existing conifer forests will remain healthy for decades yet, but they are unlikely to regenerate on their own. Where continued exotic forest is desired, replanting will be necessary.

The successional processes already occurring, must be recognised and the existing environmental conditions and recreational requirements used to guide our choice of the most appropriate type of final forest cover to achieve the most efficient use of resources. We must also recognise that it is not an option to do nothing if we are to perpetuate the forest cover for we cannot presume that the forests of the Town Belt will be self sustaining. The presence of competitive weeds, the lack of seed sources for native forest species and the limited regeneration potential of most exotic trees demands active forest management.

We must also recognise that it is not only the forest trees which have a value. Shrubs, herbs and grasses have cultural, historical, economic and ecological importance. All species must be included in the management considerations.

The variety of vegetation types on the Town Belt offers a range of recreational and visual experiences which is valued by the people of Wellington. There are those who will argue for the creation of pure native forest cover, and those who prefer the open understorey of the coniferous forest. There is scope to accommodate a range of preferences. The landscape and microclimates are varied enough to carry variety in the vegetation cover and, as this is a public reserve, the desires of as many of the community as practicable should be accommodated.

The Need For Vegetation Management

The Town Belt vegetation has great potential for educating the public about natural processes (eg, regeneration and succession) and the need to manage the Town Belt forests. This would mean achieving multi-purpose forests designed and managed to meet conservation and education objectives whilst satisfying the recreational and aesthetic requirements of the city environment. The ultimate objective would be to establish and

maintain a balanced forest system within the confines of the city which would include both exotic and native forest types.

To achieve this a planned management regime is needed for every area of the Town Belt to replace the rather ad hoc approach which has been used this century. Very little planned planting has occurred in the last 30 years, and most of the early planting now requires decisions on its future.

Vegetation Management Strategies

Detailed vegetation management strategies for the management areas are set out in Part 2 of this Plan. The regime to be adopted for a given site depends upon the existing vegetation, site conditions, recreation use and landscape considerations.

Figure 8 shows, in broad terms, the proposed pattern of vegetation cover. It should be noted that this is a long-term objective to be gradually achieved by modifying the existing vegetation.

The comparative areas of the simplified vegetation types mapped in Figures 7 and 8 are set out in Appendix 6. This shows that native vegetation is to be established on a much greater proportion of the Town Belt than at the present time, providing a basic vegetation framework (60% of the proposed vegetation types compared to 20% of the existing vegetation.) This is a realistic approach within the timeframe of this plan (50-100 years), based upon experience of native revegetation work. It is to be developed from the existing areas of native regeneration, gradually replacing most areas of rank grass and exotic scrub and replacing significant areas of conifer forest (most notably, Tinakori Hill).

Within the native framework smaller stands of conifer forest are to be perpetuated as landmark features. The largest area to be retained in conifers and mixed conifer/eucalypt forest is on Mt Victoria, due to difficult site conditions, intense recreational use and visual considerations. (See Management Area 11, Part 2 of this Plan).

The areas of mixed woodland are based upon existing forest of this type where, most particularly, exotic broadleaf trees with a native understorey provide seasonal leaf change as a feature of interest.

It is also proposed that parts of the existing mown grassland be managed by less frequent mowing as perennial meadows to allow for seasonal flower displays.

It must be stressed that the success of the vegetation management strategies will depend upon preparation of detailed implementation programmes. Implementation does not simply constitute planting programmes but must make allowance for considerable allocation of resources for maintenance and monitoring. Competition from invasive weeds is a chronic problem on the Town Belt and will be an ongoing responsibility for both existing vegetation and new planting. As stated earlier, the vegetation is constantly changing by natural processes and further changes will result from the management regimes. It is essential that these dynamics are monitored and recorded as a reference source for the future. This should not only include records of planting and maintenance programmes but regular photographic records taken every five years from specific photograph points.

There is a need to establish, within Council, a staff position to deal specifically with the management of the Town Belt (see section on Staffing page 17) including the long-term implementation of the planned vegetation management.

"Conservation Sites" listed in the District Plan

There are 26 "conservation sites" listed in the District Plan. None of these falls within the existing Town Belt, but four are immediately adjacent to the its boundary: Tawatawa

Ridge; Tapu Te Ranga Marae; Karori Reservoir; and Polhill and Waimapihi Gullies.

Policies

- 1** To prepare an implementation plan for the vegetation management in each area, generally following the regimes set out in the specific Management Area policies in Part 2 of this Plan.
- 2** Council shall instigate a feasibility study into the establishment of a multi-disciplinary Town Belt Management Unit (see also under Staffing page 17) to manage the vegetation of the Town Belt.
- 3** To establish a programme of monitoring and recording changes occurring in the Town Belt vegetation as a reference source for future management and for public consultation.
- 4** To establish, maintain and protect vegetation appropriate to the uses and site conditions of the various areas of the Town Belt.
- 5** To protect all areas of vegetation from fire and invasive weeds.
- 6** Areas of the Town Belt adjacent to the "conservation sites", listed in the District Plan, will be managed to be compatible with and to acknowledge the existence of these sites.
- 7** To stabilise and restore those areas prone to erosion with appropriate management practices. This would usually mean adopting a revegetation programme rather than building a structural support.
- 8** Areas designated to be regenerated with native species shall have all wilding pine, macrocarpa and invasive exotic tree species such as sycamore removed.
- 9** To retain gorse/broom scrub to act as a nurse crop for regenerating native plants where a return to native forest is an objective. If peripheral areas cause an aesthetic or potential fire problem they should be overplanted with native shrubs.
- 10** Where areas are to be replanted with native or non-coniferous species, consideration will be given to using a preponderance of bird food species (eg. tree lucerne, Salix spp., oaks, Banksia spp., Grevillea spp, kowhai, puriri, tree fuchsia, rewarewa).
- 11** Where planting of native species is required the species shall be those native to the Wellington Ecological Region and shall be propagated from local seed or plant sources (eco-sourced).

Interpretation and Education

Despite the fact that the Town Belt lies on the doorstep of central Wellington, surprisingly few people know its extent, its history, the ecological lessons it can teach, or the recreational opportunities it offers.

The long, unmarked boundary and the complex topography of the Town Belt exacerbate this problem, but there has also been little effort made in the past to "interpret" the Town Belt to its users and potential users.

It is the intention of this management plan to address this situation. (See Objectives 5 & 18, pages 5 -6). Out of a better understanding and knowledge will grow a greater respect, and out of this respect will grow the motivation to preserve this priceless asset for future generations with the same wisdom and forethought that was demonstrated by the founders of Wellington who put the original tract of land aside "forever".

The value Wellingtonians place on the Town Belt will also be appreciated by visitors and tourists. We need to ensure that they are made aware of what the Town Belt has to offer. To be able to walk through the "New Zealand bush" just minutes from the centre of the city is a feature which should be capitalised on.

Historic Interpretation

The whole of the Town Belt and its vegetation can be seen as an historic artefact embodying the cultural aspirations of the citizens of Wellington over the last 150 years. These unquantifiable factors and their associated ideas have shaped the Town Belt.

The history of sport in the late nineteenth century, as well as the expanding size of Wellington, decided where and when sportsfields were developed. New ideas for planting new species were tried on the Town Belt. Track systems developed in response to perceived needs which have changed over time.

An historic interpretation of the Town Belt is larger than a mere interpretation of the sites on it. However, site interpretation will need to be the focus of initial work.

Policies

- 1** Sites worthy of note in both Maori and European history shall be marked with appropriate signage.
- 2** Council shall investigate the best methods of providing comprehensive historical information on the Town Belt for citizens and visitors alike.
- 3** An inventory of historic sites and features on the Town Belt shall be compiled and legal protection sought where appropriate via the Historic Places Act and the District Plan.

Ecological Education

The ecological systems of the Town Belt have been heavily modified since human habitation began. However, there are many opportunities to set areas of the Town Belt aside for vegetation to regenerate, and this is addressed under "Vegetation Management". However, the ecology of an area encompasses all species existent in that area, irrespective of whether they be considered "weeds", "natives", "exotics", "desirable" or "undesirable". There is considerable value in being able to study the interaction of all species, including the impact of human activity.

(Note the District Plan states: "No activity shall be undertaken within 20m of a conservation site, where that activity involves any effect that may disrupt the ecology of the site.")

Policies

- 1** Interpretive information on the natural processes occurring on the Town Belt shall be supplied by way of signs and information brochures available from appropriate locations.
- 2** Local schools shall be encouraged to use the Town Belt for study projects.
- 3** Assistance from local communities shall be sought to help with revegetation projects and weed control or tree releasing in certain areas.

Maori Sites

Some important sites to the Maori people in Wellington have been included in the District Plan. Those which lie on the Town Belt are as follows:

- Moe-ra Kainga (bottom of Ohiro Rd above Maarama Cres.)
- Te Akatarewa pa (above the Mt Victoria tunnel)
- Matairangi/Tangi-te-keo (Mt Victoria)
- Omaroro cultivation area (behind Pearce St, off Connaught Tce)
- Nga Kumikumi clearing (north side of Brooklyn Rd. and Nairn St. intersection).
- Ahumairangi Ridge (parallel with Grant Road)
- Owhariu - Thorndon Track (north end of Tinakori Hill)

Policies

- 1** Any activity occurring on or near the sites listed above shall be discussed with the Tangata Whenua before any modifications are made.
- 2** Wellington City Council shall discuss ways to interpret and/or protect Maori sites with the Tangata Whenua.

Tourism

Wellington is today identified as a tourist destination in a way never thought of in the past. Tourism is the largest single foreign exchange industry in New Zealand, generating \$3.3 billion per year, an increase of 19% since 1992. Wellington is already among the five regions which benefit most from overseas tourism and the Wellington Tourist Board is investigating ways to increase its share of the growing tourist industry.

Arguably, the Town Belt is a forgotten legacy which has been undervalued. The Zoo and the Botanic Garden attract considerable visitor interest, but it is time to promote the merits of the whole of the Town Belt as an essential part of the 'Wellington Experience'. Its forested hillsides and undeveloped ridgetops are integral to the rugged beauty of Wellington's landscape, with numerous opportunities to experience and appreciate the visual contrasts that make Wellington a scenic destination.

Research by the New Zealand Tourism Board reveals that short bush walks rate high amongst the six most popular activities undertaken by overseas visitors. This alone makes the Town Belt a prime location for developing tourism. Its proximity to the central business district, its numerous access points and the variety of short, relatively easy walks through forest clearly provides opportunities that tourists are looking for.

Furthermore, there is potential to tap the growing popularity of 'ecotourism' by promoting the Town Belt as an urban ecosystem - a concept which encompasses the

recreation, health and aesthetic needs of urban dwellers with principles of conservation and forest management.

Currently, visitor information relating to the Town Belt is fragmentary - focusing on the Botanic Garden and Zoo and the Northern and Southern Walkways (routes longer than tourists' preferred short walks). There is potential to promote the Town Belt in its entirety as a tourist attraction, stressing its importance in Wellington. A range of the preferred short walks and visitor focal points should be planned throughout with appropriate visitor facilities, linked in with visitor themes such as conservation, historic and scenic interpretation.

Specific opportunities for upgrading and extending walking opportunities, providing site-related visitor information and providing a range of environments are identified in the specific Management Area policies, in Part 2 of this Plan.

The Town Belt's tourist potential warrants serious investigation and formulation of a promotion strategy which would form the basis of Council planning and funding as well as opportunities for seeking sponsorship.

Policies

- 1** Council shall prepare a strategic tourism marketing plan for the Town Belt.
- 2** In the interim, Council shall promote the existing Town Belt facilities (eg, tracks, information, viewpoints) as part of the 'Wellington Experience' for visitors.
- 3** Tourist activities and the promotion of tourist activities shall not be detrimental to the informal, and natural character of the Town Belt.

The following part of this management plan describes the policies which will guide all aspects of the future of the Town Belt and provide a framework for continuity of management which this asset has not had before.