

Report 5
(1215/52/IM)

DRAFT OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

The intention of this report is to brief Councillors on the preparation of the draft Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan (see Appendix 1), the purpose of the plan, and key issues related to the plan. This report intends to aid the decision-making of Councillors in approving the draft management plan for public comment.

2. Executive Summary

The Otari Native Botanic Garden Management Plan (1996) was finalised ten years ago and it is now timely and good practise to carry out a full review of the Management Plan.

A draft aim, goals and objectives have been developed to provide long term strategic direction for Otari-Wilton's Bush. These are derived from discussions with staff and community workshops.

The key issues covered in the Draft Management Plan are:

- That Otari-Wilton's Bush continues to be the leading New Zealand native plant botanic garden and the international significance of the collections are recognised. *Key action: completion of Collections Review (already underway).*
- That the forest of Otari-Wilton's Bush is actively managed as an important remnant of ancient forest, and as an ecological node and corridor. *Key action: Advisory group of experts established.*
- The cultural heritage of Otari-Wilton's Bush is recognised, protected and interpreted. *Key action: Work with Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust and iwi to collate and publish a history of the reserve.*
- Recognition and enhancement of the role of Otari-Wilton's Bush in educating people about New Zealand's unique native plant life. *Key actions: Investigate the need for an Education Officer or similar to coordinate Otari-Wilton's Bush educational programmes and resources; Interpretation Plan developed.*
- Continuing to provide a range of pedestrian-based recreation experiences – from a wilderness experience to urban recreation. *Key action: To*

- *develop the circular walkway so that the lower section is accessible to wheelchair users and prams from the North Picnic Area car park.*
- *That Otari-Wilton's Bush is promoted as a significant visitor attraction. Key actions: Develop a detailed Marketing and Promotion Strategy unique to Otari-Wilton's Bush.*
- *Extension of the management area to include the Project Kaiwharawhara restoration planting area and to improve ecological and recreational connectivity. Key action: Seek the formal gazettal as Otari-Wilton's Bush for additional areas identified in this management plan.*
- *A Landscape Development Plan is required to set out the overall concept for the future development of the area, including main character areas, key focal points, the track network and location of functional uses such as visitor and management facilities. This will include consideration of best use of Curator's House. The Landscape Development Plan will be notified for public comment.*

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Recommend to Council that the draft Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan is approved for public comment in accordance with the requirements of the Reserves Act 1977.*
3. *Instruct officers to meet directly with Treaty partners and key stakeholder organisations as part of the consultation process.*
4. *Approve that the results of written submissions be reported to the committee in February and that during that same meeting submitters will have the opportunity to be heard.*
5. *Note that a final plan will be presented to the committee for consideration and approval after due consideration of submissions and subsequent amendments.*

4. Background

The Otari Native Botanic Garden Management Plan (1996) was finalised ten years ago. Some of the priorities identified in it have now been implemented, while other actions remain outstanding and in need of clarification and strategic justification. Therefore it is now both timely and good practise to carry out a full review of the Management Plan.

The current draft management plan has focused on clarifying the future roles of Otari-Wilton's Bush and setting a strategic direction for the next 10 years. Key

policy developments and changes are summarised in Table 1, along with a comparison of implementation actions.

Table 1: Differences between the 1996 Management Plan and current draft

Theme	Key policy changes	Implementation
Plant collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: themes for plant collections established ○ New: policy around ethnobotanical maori collections (where ethnobotany is the study of how plants have been used, managed and perceived in human societies) ○ New: policy on breeding and propagating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: Collections Review, taking collection themes into consideration
Natural ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: forest management zones defined, clarifying management priorities for education, forest restoration, wildlife habitat restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishment of advisory group carried through from 1996 with clarification of function of the group
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New section 	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revised: Education themes for plant collections, natural ecosystems and cultural heritage ○ New: Policies around different forms of education (interpretation, advisory, school, community, training and development) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need for interpretation plan carried through from 1996 with clarification of requirements ○ New: Investigate the need for an Education Officer or similar to coordinate Otari-Wilton's Bush educational programmes and resources, and implement findings of the investigation as appropriate
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: Recognition of importance of maintaining a range of pedestrian based recreation (back country to urban) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: provide access to Outer Green Belt Skyline Track
Marketing & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: Policies developed around promoting visibility of the reserve, leadership in native plant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: develop marketing and promotion strategy ○ New: develop relationship management plan

	knowledge, clarifying visitor target groups, fostering and managing strategic relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New: develop Memorandums of Understanding with key partners
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revised: Landscape development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carried through from 1996 with inclusion of feasibility study for a café, principles of sustainability, consideration of the plant collection themes and natural and cultural heritage stories, and the need for notification for public comment
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revised: Boundary management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some requirements for gazettal carried through from 1996 ○ New: Addition of 'Wilton Park' area (excluding sportsfield), note that this area is already under Parks and Gardens management

4.1 Strategic direction

A full review of the management plan was required in order to ensure that Otari-Wilton's Bush is managed in a way that is relevant today and for future generations. Over the last ten years, the Council has developed new policies and strategic directions that need to be integrated with the management of Otari-Wilton's Bush, of particular relevance are the Outer Green Belt Management Plan (May 2004), and the Environment Strategy (2006).

Otari-Wilton's Bush sits within the *Outer Green Belt* cluster management plan (2004), where it has been identified to be managed in accordance with its own specific management plan. In addition, the Outer Green Belt Management Plan identifies specific policies for Otari-Wilton's Bush, including:

- Interpret and implement the management plan to reflect the full name of the area; Otari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve
- Review the management plan by 2006

The Long Term Council Community Plan includes seven strategies including a new **Environmental Strategy** that provides high-level statements about the Council's long-term environmental intentions for Wellington. Otari-Wilton's Bush sits primarily under this Strategy, and this management plan is prepared in the context of the following Council outcomes:

- Making Wellington more liveable, where Wellington's natural environment is more accessible to all for a wide range of social and recreational opportunities that do not compromise environmental values;
- Creating a stronger sense of place, where Wellington recognises and protects significant features of its natural heritage;
- More actively engaged, where a collaborative participatory approach is pursued for environmental kaitiakitanga (guardianship) by information sharing and establishing partnerships;
- Better connected, where Wellington has a network of green space;
- Safer, including clean water and air to protect public health and ecosystems;
- Healthier, with the protection of land and water based ecosystems to sustain natural processes;
- More competitive, with a high quality environment attracting more visitors.

In the shorter term, Otari-Wilton's Bush also has the potential to contribute to the three year priorities of the Environment Strategy. In particular; increasing efforts to improve the protection of streams (with policies around stream management and education), alignment with principles of biodiversity management, and actively fostering and managing partnerships with stakeholders.

This management plan also sits in the context the Council's **Economic Development Strategy**, where a 10 year outcome is to advocate for tourism products that promote Wellington's unique sense of place. The unique cultural and natural heritage of Otari-Wilton's Bush strongly positions it within Wellington's nature-based tourism attractions.

This management plan is also influenced by the **Culture and Wellbeing Strategy**, which emphasises enhancing elements of the city's sense of place, including native flora and fauna; and becoming more actively engaged, including access to historical and heritage information, and investing in the city's public environment.

Within Otari-Wilton's Bush itself, there have also been strategic developments which need to be recognised in the future management of the reserve. The **Otari-Wilton's Bush Marketing Strategy and Brand Concept Development: Recommended Actions** (Carr, 2004) identifies brand development and story-telling as critical steps towards creating Otari-Wilton's Bush as a national and international destination. **Project Kaiwharawhara**, an innovative catchment level community stream protection project, also has strong associations with Otari-Wilton's Bush.

4.2 Summary of current planning process

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| 10 May 06 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elected Member Session Briefing on upcoming review and discussion paper: <i>Reviewing Otari Native Botanic Garden Management Plan 1996</i>. The Discussion paper raised key issues identified by staff, and the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, Wellington Tenth's Trust and Ngati Toa were consulted during its preparation. |
| 25 May – 23 June 06 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public notification of intention to carry out the review, supported by discussion paper.• 36 submissions received on discussion paper (June 2006) with comments on key issues. |
| 19 July 06 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshop held with staff to discuss submissions, issues and opportunities, and a vision for Otari-Wilton's Bush. |
| 3, 8, 10 August 06 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops held for submitters – submissions, issues and opportunities were summarised and discussed. Feedback was considered and incorporated into the draft management plan. |
| 12 October 06 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of Draft Management Plan to SPC seeking approval for public comment. |

5. Discussion

5.1 Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this Management Plan is to provide Wellington City Council with clear guidance for the management of Otari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush (Otari-Wilton's Bush) over the next 10 years. This plan recognises the rich history of Otari-Wilton's Bush and its multiple roles as a botanic garden, forest reserve, and place of learning, research and recreation. Goals, objectives and policies give guidance for the development, management, operation and public use of Otari-Wilton's Bush.

5.2 Vision statement and goals

The vision and goals are a key innovation of the revised management plan. The vision was developed through an analysis of key issues, discussion with the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, staff workshops, and through workshops with public submitters on the discussion paper: *Reviewing Otari Native Garden Management 1996* (May 2006).

The goals represent the strategic steps required to begin to realise the vision, and their implementation is described through the objectives and policies.

5.3 Key issues, opportunities and actions

Key issues and opportunities for the future management of Otari-Wilton's Bush have been raised through review of Council's Strategic Outcomes, discussions with staff, discussions with the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, and through public submissions and workshops on the discussion paper (*Reviewing Otari Native Garden Management Plan 1996*, May 2006). The following sections describe the key issues raised and opportunities relating to these issues.

Plant collections

Otari-Wilton's Bush is the country's leading native botanic garden, and the native plant collections are an important part of the heritage of the reserve. The exclusive focus of Otari-Wilton's Bush on native plants has been a point of difference since the official opening of Otari Open Air Native Plant Museum in 1926. The current draft management plan proposes principle themes for Otari-Wilton's Bush that reflect and enhance this unique position, and policies are designed to enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of native flora, as well as to preserve the role of Otari-Wilton's Bush in conservation, particularly for holding 'insurance populations' of rare and threatened plants.

Key policies are:

- Individual review and justification for each plant collection considering fit with the principle themes, contribution to goals and objectives of the Management plan, significance of the collection and public appeal
- Provision of interpretative information at every collection
- Ethnobotanical collections managed in liaison with Tangata Whenua and traditional weavers.
- Cultivation areas restricted to those areas already cultivated.
- Small scale propagation programmes carried out for conservation purposes in liaison with conservation organisations.

Key actions are:

- Completion of Collections Review (already underway).

Natural ecosystems

The natural ecosystems, in particular the ancient forest remnant known as 'Wilton's Bush', are an important part of what people value about Otari-Wilton's Bush. Issues relate to the need for active management of the forest, and recognition of its role as an ecological corridor for wildlife travelling from Karori Wildlife Sanctuary to the harbour and Outer Green Belt.

Objectives relate to the protection and enhancement or restoration of the ecosystems, including their potential as wildlife habitat.

Key policies are:

- Forest management zones, where the reserve area is divided into 5 management areas, each defined by different issues and management priorities.
- Establishment of monitoring for bird breeding success.
- Detailed pest management plans, in accordance with the Pest Management Plan (2005).

Key actions are:

- Establish an advisory group of experts to offer advice on ecological management, including forest health monitoring, enhancement and wildlife habit restoration.

Cultural heritage

Throughout the preparation of this draft management plan, many different aspects of heritage were identified. Through the dedication of certain individuals, efforts of the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, and the previous management plan, there is much information about the history of the land, both pre and post its reserve status. The current draft focuses on the need to recognise, protect and interpret the multiple aspects of cultural heritage. As such, new objectives and policies have been developed.

Key policies are:

- Recognition of the cultural heritage of Otari-Wilton's Bush through the collation of historical material as an on-site archival resource.
- Incorporation of principles of Mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge).
- On-site interpretation of important heritage features.

Key actions are:

- Work with Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust and iwi to collate and publish a history of Otari-Wilton's Bush.

Education

The educational role of Otari-Wilton's Bush received much comment. For many people this is a key opportunity for the reserve, and is essentially an unrealised service.

Education means many things to many people; from school education, scientific research, to interpretative information. Goals have been developed to encourage a range of educational opportunities for targeted audiences, and policies have been developed around suitable forms of education addressing:

- Interpretation, signs and labelling (eg provision of plant labelling).
- Advisory information (eg provision of self-guiding brochures).
- Community education programmes (eg guided walks, open days, planting advice and seminars).

- School education programmes (eg resources linked with school curriculum guidelines).
- Training and development (eg apprenticeship and intern programmes).

Key actions are:

- Investigate the need for an Education Officer or similar to coordinate Otari-Wilton's Bush educational programmes and resources, and implement findings of investigation as appropriate.
- Plant labelling implemented in educational zones of native forest
- Interpretation Plan developed that recognises educational themes listed in Section 3.4.1 of the Draft Management Plan.

Recreation

Maintaining access, links and a variety of pedestrian based experiences were the key issues and opportunities for recreation at Otari-Wilton's Bush. Due to its relationship with the Outer Green Belt, and varied topography and landscape, Otari-Wilton's Bush has every opportunity to effectively manage these issues.

There were no significant policy changes with respect to restricted and prohibited activities within the reserve. Track maintenance and standards were updated to be consistent with the Open Space Access Plan (2004) and to protect the range of pedestrian experiences, from paths to tramping tracks.

Key actions are:

- To develop the circular walkway so that the lower section is accessible to wheelchair users and prams from the North Picnic Area car park.

Marketing and promotion

The other key issue that emerged, particularly from the workshops with submitters, was that of marketing and promotion. Marketing and promotion are recognised as being critical to ensuring the continued recognition of Otari-Wilton's Bush as New Zealand's leading native botanic garden and as a garden of international significance. Many submitters cited examples of taking international visitors through Otari-Wilton's Bush and witnessing the visitor's enjoyment of the scenery and the unique forest. Otari-Wilton's Bush is a resource that has potential to add to Wellington's nature-based tourism experiences, and presents a unique opportunity to educate people about New Zealand's unique plant life, and Wellington's natural ecosystems.

In 2004 a report was prepared for Otari-Wilton's Bush that recommended key actions for a marketing strategy and brand concept development¹. It identified 4 key steps for Otari-Wilton's Bush; (1) gain greater public visibility, (2) to position itself as a lead organisation, (3) to create specific visitor and audience objectives and targets, and (4) to build a network of relationships.

¹ Carr, Gisella (2004). *Otari-Wilton's Bush Marketing Strategy and Brand Concept Development: Recommended Actions*. Unpublished report prepared for Wellington City Council, December 2004.

Goals, objectives and policies have been developed to begin the process of realising these steps, and to promote Otari-Wilton's Bush as a nationally and internationally unique destination. Building and formalising a network of strategic relationships is an important part of this process.

Key policies are:

- Actively promoting Otari-Wilton's Bush as a tourist destination.
- Actively seeking strategic relationships with botanical, research and conservation organisations.
- Promotional activities may include commercial interest (eg specialised guided tour packages which are booked and paid for).

Key actions are:

- Develop a detailed Marketing and Promotion Strategy unique to Otari-Wilton's Bush. Key messages must be consistent with the vision for Otari-Wilton's Bush, include specific audience objectives and strategies and the evaluation of these.

General policies

Policies which deal with a range of issues are included in the final policy section of the draft management plan, *Management and Administration*. Key policies relate to:

- Landscape Development Plan: Required to set out the overall concept for the future development of the reserve, including an assessment of the best use of the Curator's House. A feasibility study for a café on-site will also be included in the landscape development plan.
- Boundary management and land acquisition:
 - The inclusion of the 'Wilton Park' area is proposed. This is in accordance with recommendations in the Outer Green Belt Management Plan. The area is already linked to Otari-Wilton's Bush in appearance and ecological function, and is a key recreational and access route.
 - Wilton Bowling Club (122 Wilton Road) is identified as an area to be considered as an addition to Otari-Wilton's Bush once the lease expires (after the term of right of renewal, 2022) or if it is terminated for any reason. The function of this area could be both as a buffer to the forest remnant and as potential education, collection, or facility space.
- Funding and sponsorship: The potential of sponsorship is recognised for special projects.

- Commemorative memorials: Policies have been developed based on the Commemorative Policy (2003) and contributions to revegetation at Otari-Wilton's Bush are encouraged as a way to remember loved ones.

5.4 Implementation

Actions for implementation are listed, in order of priority, under each relevant section, and are tabulated in *Section 4* of the Draft Management Plan. Actions are placed into one of three categories:

- Strategic Development (SD): actions key to the strategic development of Otari-Wilton's Bush.
- Maintenance activities (MA): actions that should occur as part of the day to day management and development of the reserve.
- Special future projects (SP): will contribute to the overall development of the reserve but are less critical to its strategic growth and will be implemented as resources (staffing or otherwise) become available.

Submitters on the draft management plan will be invited to comment on these implementation actions and their priority

Once actions are clearly prioritised, they will be put into a priority sequence and where possible costs will be estimated and timeframes given in the final management plan. It is expected that actions identified will be funded through the budgets that are developed for the relevant Asset Management Plans and annual plans. Most will be funded through existing projects (c560, Botanic gardens services and CX348, Botanic gardens renewals), although some will require additional funds to be requested through the new initiative process.

5.5 Proposed communication and consultation on draft

The Reserves Act (1977) requires the Draft Management Plan to be publicly notified and available for comment for no less than a period of two months and states that submitters must have the opportunity to be heard in front of Committee prior to recommending the plan to the Minister of Conservation for approval.

Accordingly, the submission period will run from early November 2006 until the end of January 2007 and will be advertised in the local paper the Western News, and on the Our Wellington page in the DominionPost.

Anyone who wishes to be heard in support of their submission will have the opportunity to speak to Strategy and Policy Committee. This will happen, subject to need, when the results of the written submissions are reported to Committee in February 2007. The final management plan will be presented to SPC after any amendments resulting from the due consideration of submissions.

In addition to these statutory requirements, the communication plan for the Draft Otari-Wilton's Bush Management Plan includes the use of:

- Media release/s
- Council website
- On-site notices
- Direct distribution to key stakeholders and previous submitters
- Distribution to libraries and Service Centres, as well as at Otari-Wilton's Bush Visitors Centre.
- Meetings with the Council's Treaty Partners and with the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust.

Public meetings are not planned but will be considered if there is the demand or need.

6. Conclusion

Throughout the development of this draft management plan, it has been clear that there are endless opportunities for Otari-Wilton's Bush. The challenge has been to focus the energy behind these ideas and opportunities on clarifying the future role of Otari-Wilton's Bush. The vision and goals have been developed to establish this role and were developed in consideration of Council's strategic priorities and through workshops with the community and staff.

With the clarification of the future role of Otari-Wilton's Bush, opportunities could be considered strategically. The objectives, policies and implementation actions are the strategic steps required over the next 10 years in order to move towards realising the vision that –

Otari-Wilton's Bush provides an accessible experience of New Zealand's ancient natural environment, and inspires visitors to value and appreciate our unique native plant taonga (treasure).

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The draft management plan supports Council's Environment Strategy, contributing to a number of Environmental Outcomes (see Section 4.1 of the Draft Management Plan). It also contributes to the Economic and Development Strategy in advocating for tourism products that promote Wellington's unique sense of place; and to the Culture and Wellbeing Strategy.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

Funding for Otari-Wilton's Bush is managed under the Botanic Gardens Asset Management Plan, C560 (Botanic gardens services) and CX348 (Botanic gardens renewals). Many of the implementation actions will be funded through existing budgets. Some new initiative funding may be required.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Otari-Wilton's Bush is an area Mana Whenua regard as important, both for its historical import, and for its education potential in matauranga maori (traditional knowledge) and rongoa maori (traditional medicine) current plant collections and potential for rongoa maori. The review of the management plan has been discussed with both the Tenth Trust and Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira. Further meetings will be held as part of the consultation process on the draft management plan.

4) Decision-Making

Committee are asked to approve this draft management plan so that the public consultation process for the development of this management plan can continue. Implementation represents key strategic actions required to meet the potential of Otari-Wilton's Bush over the next 10 years and for the draft management plan the decision-making focus is one establishing priorities.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Consultation has, and is, being carried out in accordance with the Reserves Act (1977). In addition, workshops have been held with interested persons on identifying issues and opportunities for the reserves and on developing a strategic vision.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana whenua were consulted prior to the initial discussion paper and notification of the review of the management plan. Although submissions on the intention to review the management plan were not received, at the time of the meetings interest in the review was expressed. Officers intend to meet again to discuss the draft management plan once it has been approved by Committee.

6) Legal Implications

None.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report and draft management plan is consistent with existing policy, including the Outer Green Belt Management Plan (2004), the Recreation Strategy (2003), the Open Space Access Plan (2004) , and the Pest Management Plan (2005).