



Newtown Residents' Association

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29th October 2015

Submission on the Wellington Town Belt Bill

To the Local Government and Environment Committee

This submission is from the Newtown Residents' Association. We wish to appear before the committee to speak to our submission.

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing the suburbs of Newtown, Berhampore, Mt Cook and parts of Melrose. We are an active local group of residents and businesspeople, concerned with maintaining and improving our suburb's liveability, connectedness and sustainability. For 100 years our organisation has worked actively to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live. We care passionately about the design, function and ecology of our urban and natural environment. The Association has a long history of contributing to Town Belt policy and Town Belt Management Plans.

Submission

The Newtown Residents' Association supports the overall concepts of this Bill:

- Updating the legislative framework into a modern and living document.
- Providing key principles that act to provide clear guidance.
- Providing flexibility through 10 yearly management plans to cater for the changing expectations of the citizens of Wellington over time.

Comments

The Newtown Residents' Association (NRA) does however wish to make the following comments:

Clause 10: Management Plan

The Newtown Residents' Association supports the principle of an Act that empowers the Wellington City Council (Council) to manage the area within self-imposed restrictions on what it can do, and with public consultation on any major changes to the Plan. The Bill

confirms flexibility for the Council to develop management plans through formal public local processes rather than a national legislative process.

Carmichael Reservoir:

In our submission to the Council on the draft Bill we said “Newtown Residents' Association has submitted before that the limited vehicle access to the Carmichael Reservoir above the south end of Coromandel Street has long been supported by the Association and as nothing has changed in regard to the issues, particularly parking for local Newtown residents in this area, we continue to advocate for this access to be accommodated under the new Bill.” We regret that in practice there was no accommodation made in the Bill for the local residents to continue to have vehicle access and parking in this section of the Town Belt.

Clause 23: Application of the Public Works Act.

The interaction with the Public Works Act 1981 has been one of the most contentious aspects of this Bill. The Wellington City Council has proposed amendments with the intention of providing greater certainty around timing and less risk associated with the taking of Wellington Town Belt land, while giving the Council the opportunity to advocate for the best possible compensation - including land to add to the Wellington Town Belt. We agree with these principles.

While we recognise that the Crown may need to acquire land through the Public Works Act (such as for the Ruahine Street widening) we feel that the compensation process should result in land that adjoins and enhances the purpose of the Town Belt being incorporated into the Town Belt, rather than an exchange of money or release of land that was earlier alienated by the Crown.

Clause 24: Transitional provisions.

24(2) states: “ After the commencement of this Act, the Council may, without complying with section 10(4), make changes to the *Wellington Town Belt Management Plan (June 2013)* that are consequential on the commencement of this Act.”

The Newtown Residents Association is not comfortable supporting this, as the final outcome of the Bill is still unknown and the possible interpretations by Council Officers and Councillors are also unknown at this stage. We note that there is no timeframe given for the duration of the proposed transitional provisions.

We would like to see a consultation process for any changes to the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan retained whenever changes are made to it. We would also like to see an expectation for a publicly consulted review of the management plan to commence shortly after the Bill is passed into law.

Conclusion

The Newtown Residents' Association is in support of the Wellington Town Belt Bill, with the provisos noted above. We look forward to an Act that provides a comprehensive, locally determined framework for the protection of this vital green space for generations to come.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rhona Carson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Rhona" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and the last name "Carson" follows in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is positioned above the printed name "Rhona Carson".

Rhona Carson

President

Newtown Residents' Association