



## **The President's Report to the 2021 Annual General Meeting, 20th September 2021:**

outlining the main Newtown Residents' Association activities during the financial year from July 2020 till June 2021, with additional notes about activities from then until the present.

### **2020-21 Activities, month by month**

#### **July 2020**

At the start of the 2020-21 year we had been through the first COVID-19 lockdown and were again at Level 1, with few restrictions on activities. The main topic at the July meeting was the Kainga Ora developments in Coromandel St. A number of the Coromandel St residents were unhappy with aspects of the two planned developments, and wanted more dialogue with Kainga Ora about these. The Kainga Ora team were going to be at the meeting, but at the last minute were unable to come because of illness. There was still a robust discussion and sharing of ideas, and Cr Fleur Fitzsimons offered to facilitate a meeting between Kainga Ora and the affected residents at a later date.

#### **August 2020**

The long-delayed Planning for Growth – Draft Spatial Plan consultation started this month. When the draft was released we were surprised and shocked at the extent of the proposed removal of the pre-1930s protections, and the wide areas zoned for 6 storey buildings.

By the time of our monthly meeting we were again in COVID-19 level 2 and we elected to meet by zoom. The Draft Spatial Plan was the meeting topic. Our position was and is that we welcome new development in the Suburban Centre and on other sites where buildings of up to 6 storeys can be positioned so that they don't cause excessive shading to the surrounding homes, but we are very against the prospect of such developments being 'pepper potted' through the low-rise residential streets.

A new group – We Are Newtown – sprang up in the Newtown community, a mix of Association members and other Newtownians. This group was active in raising awareness about the draft Spatial Plan, set up a new Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/weAreNewtownPoneke>) and printed and distributed flyers to inform as many locals as possible about the plans, and to advertise the Public Meeting for 16<sup>th</sup> September which the Residents' Association sponsored.

#### **September 2020**

Our Residents' Association meeting in September was the AGM on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September.

September was a busy month, with a lot of action around the **Draft Spatial Plan**, which continued to be the main concern. Our Vice President Martin Hanley was a regular source of advice and assistance, and he, Anna Kemble Welch and James Coyle were particularly helpful in mapping out alternatives for building zones in Newtown, which were then presented at the public meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September at the Salvation Army Hall. As it was under Level 2 restrictions we had a maximum of 100 and had to turn people away, but a lot of people watched online. The meeting was live streamed on the Newtown Residents' Association Facebook Page, and you will find it here- <https://www.facebook.com/NewtownResidentsAssociation/videos/1023328101429628>

Many thanks to Sam Somers for organising the live stream, to Yadana Saw for expert meeting facilitation and to all the speakers on the night. You can find an outline of the speakers on our website -

<https://newtown.org.nz/2020/09/17/meeting-on-the-wcc-draft-spatial-plan-16th-september/>. Thanks also to

the Salvation Army people for their help in organising the meeting and providing assistance with audio-visual presentations. There were many comments about what a great facility this is for Newtown.

On September 25<sup>th</sup> I represented the Newtown Residents' Association at a meeting organised by WCC to inform Residents' Associations about the Draft Plan, and about the Long Term Plan process. Peter Frater also attended, representing the Berhampore Community Association. It was clear at the meeting that there are shared concerns eg about the need for infrastructure to proceed development, about the application of the NPS-UD2020 rules (eg what is regarded as a 'walkable distance', for instance in Johnsonville), and about the prospects for good design (eg Inner City Wellington commenting about the current high rise developments with shoebox apartments not being what they would want or expect for the future).

On 24<sup>th</sup> September we were back in COVID-19 level 1, and we hosted a **Meet the Candidates Meeting** at St Anne's Hall, where we heard from the Rongotai Electorate candidates for the General Election. Patrick Morgan and Yadana Saw facilitated this meeting, and many other Association members helped with setting up and clearing up, and providing the supper, which is an important part of these meetings! Thank you to all involved.

Also in September I made a submission on behalf of the Association (using the online submission form) on the Wellington City Council **Proposed Solid Waste Management and Minimisation Bylaw 2020**.

### **October 2020**

After an intense few weeks of discussion about what the Draft Spatial Plan could mean for Newtown, we made our Association's Submission on October 5th.

Our monthly meeting on October 19th discussed housing issues, including City Housing and Kainga Ora developments. Our Association is strongly in favour of supporting and adding to housing for low income people in Newtown. We also talked about how to access resources for supporting people with mental health issues on our streets. The other main topic was Waste Minimisation, a discussion led by Cr Laurie Foon.

On 21<sup>st</sup> October I made an oral submission on the **Proposed Solid Waste Management and Minimisation ByLaw 2020**, following on from the online submission in September.

### **November 2020**

Our final meeting for 2020 was on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Diane Livingston and Clare Lundon, Wellington City Council Engagement and Consultation Advisors, attended to discuss the WCC Long Term Plan and the Innovating Streets 'parklets' project. They led an exercise in assigning priorities to various actions under the headings of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Environmental matters which could be included in the Long Term Plan. This was well received and led to lively discussion.

We welcomed Martyn Pinckard, Chairperson of the Body Corporate at the new apartments at 16 Constable St, who had come to the meeting to introduce himself.

The meeting also talked about the Adelaide Hotel (aka the Tramways) on Adelaide Rd, where the owner had applied for consent to demolish it. The meeting passed this motion: That we make a submission to the Council supporting the construction of housing subject to the retention of two sides of the facade and incorporation of historical references.

November was also the month for oral submissions and round-table forums about the Draft Spatial Plan. Anna Kemble Welch and I made an oral submission on behalf of the Residents' Association, and a number of other members made submissions or attended a forum as individuals.

### **December 2020**

Katie Taylor-Duke, the WCC Senior Arts Advisor, advised that the Council's Arts team had engaged artists, Liana Leiataua and Ruth Robertson-Taylor to work with the Newtown community to co-design a mural at the

entrance to the library on the pillars and surrounding areas. Liana Leiataua is the artist who originally painted the pillars at the library in the 1990s. These artworks had to be painted over due to general mural wear and tear, and Liana is very much looking forward to working at this site again. Katie set up a stakeholders meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the project and I attended on behalf of the Association. This was followed by a process over the following months of inviting input from the community and having a workshop at Library on design ideas, agreeing on a proposed design and consulting further with mana whenua. At the time of writing in September 2021 this is still a work in progress.

There was no formal Association meeting in December but there was an open invitation for members to come to my place for a pot-luck BBQ on 21st December, and we had a very enjoyable evening.

### **January 2021**

January was a holiday month, with no Association meeting and little business that needed attention.

### **February 2021**

Our first meeting for 2021 was on February 15<sup>th</sup>. The main topic was a presentation by Joakim Linman from Predator Free Wellington, outlining the success of the Predator Free Miramar project and the new plans for an intensive rat eradication operation throughout Newtown and neighbouring suburbs. We also heard from Warwick Taylor that the Wellington Residents' Coalition has been re-activated to campaign to keep Wellington's water assets under the direct ownership and control of a publicly-elected body and to stop the introduction of water meters. There were updates about the Newtown Festival planned for March 7<sup>th</sup>, and about progress on the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre re-development and the consequent move for the Citizens' Advice Bureau from the Community Centre to Kia Ora Newtown in Constable St and the Tool library move to new premises next to Newtown Library.

### **March 2021**

The Association monthly meeting was on March 15<sup>th</sup>, and started with reflection on the anniversary of the March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 massacre. Representatives from the Greater Wellington Regional Council presented the draft Regional Land Transport plan and the draft Regional Public Transport Plan, on which they were seeking feedback, and Cr Laurie Foon spoke about the engagement / consultation process exploring the formation of a Māori seat on the council, and about the reversal of proposed library cuts.

At the end of March I made submissions on the GWRC Regional Land Transport Plan and the draft Regional Public Transport Plan on behalf of the Association.

Newtown Festival and other events: At the end of February Wellington had moved into COVID-19 level 2 for a week, forcing the postponement of Newtown Festival from March 7<sup>th</sup> till April 11<sup>th</sup>. The Festival is now run by a stand-alone Trust, but this had a big impact on the many Association members who are still closely involved with the organisation.

The associated but very much smaller Great Newtown Garage Sale Day was able to go ahead as planned on March 20<sup>th</sup>, and also on March 20<sup>th</sup> till 22<sup>nd</sup> there was the first Newtown Open Studios Event, initiated by Bidy Bunzl and James Fraser and a group of local artists. This was a walk through Newtown to discover seventeen local artists and their studios, with the opportunity to purchase original work directly from them.

### **April 2021**

The postponed Newtown Festival took place on Sunday April 11<sup>th</sup> and was a great success.

On April 13<sup>th</sup> I made an oral submission on the GWRC Land Transport Plan. We were asking for more, and more consistent, engagement with the community about transport proposals. I also suggested that if there were plans for Mass Rapid Transport through Newtown this could threaten the 'liveability' of our suburban centre. It

might be easier to make progress if the emphasis was on the reliability and predictability of public transport rather than rapidity.

At the monthly meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup> we heard the following presentations -

- 1) WCC Innovating Streets organisers reported largely positive feedback on the platform which was installed outside the Friendly Bakery and Black Coffee, and shared plans to increase such parklets in the community.
- 2) A team from GWRC presented the 3 main consultation themes from the draft 2021-2030 Long Term Plan:
  - To de-carbonise public transport – busses, rail and ferries.
  - To restore areas of regional parks to native bush and wetlands as a climate change mitigation strategy
  - To provide more support (especially secretariat support) to constituent Councils to coordinate planning for Regional growth
- 3) WCC introduced their Long Term Plan Consultation, highlighting the extremely challenging financial environment and the huge costs due to the earthquakes and to lack of infrastructure maintenance (especially in water infrastructure) over many years.

## **May 2021**

In May the Executive appointed Michelle Wolland to the vacant position of Treasurer. Thank you Michelle for making yourself available for this.

We followed up the WCC LTP presentation last month with a written submission on the LTP.

At the monthly meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup> Jared Corston (WCC) gave a detailed presentation outlining the work the Council are doing to gather data on, and better understand, the demographics and characteristics of people living in Newtown and other catchment areas. This information will be used to plan for the needs of communities and had a particular focus on the role of Community Centres in delivering Council services and facilities to those most in need.

The meeting also noted the need to follow up with the Council area parking plan, and that the outcome of the Spatial plan consultation was due out later in June.

## **June 2021**

On June 16<sup>th</sup> we submitted our reactions to the WCC LTP proposals to fundamentally remodel the Te Ngākau Civic Precinct. They had agreed to demolish the existing Municipal Office and Civic Administration Buildings. There was little detail about the proposed new design, but there was a discussion of opening up the space by also demolishing the City To Sea Bridge, and the Jack Ilott Green was included in an 'area for change'. We are not alone in protesting about the possibility of losing this all-too-rare green space, and in our submission we supported the Inner City Wellington submission with the same concerns.

The proposed Final Spatial Plan was released in mid June. This increased the area of Newtown to be designated as having 'special character' considerably – this area would need consent for any demolitions, and new buildings in the area would be limited to 3 storeys.

At our monthly meeting on June we had extensive discussion about the Spatial Plan, and agreed on a Newtown Position Statement. The Newtown Position is that we would support having buildings up to 6 storeys in designated positions, particularly in the Suburban Centre, but that all other building outside the Character Areas should be limited to 3 storeys. We are particularly emphasising the need to preserve access to sunshine. The June meeting also supported a motion to reduce the speed limits in Newtown to 30kph, which is in line with other suburban centres, and heard about efforts to revitalise the community gardens in Carrara Park.

On June 24<sup>th</sup> the Wellington City Council Planning and Environment Committee met and discussed the Plan in a day long marathon meeting. The Councillors rejected the revised plan for increased character areas and voted to restrict these precincts to the areas that had been identified in the original Draft Plan. The intention of this is to allow buildings of up to 6 storeys in most parts of Newtown, Mt Cook, Berhampore and other inner suburbs. They also voted to increase the 'walking catchment' to 15mins. This means that anywhere within 15 mins walk of the Central City area (which extends along Adelaide Rd to John St) will also be subject to the NPS-UD

requirement to allow developments of up to 6 storeys. There is extensive coverage of our reaction to this on the website <https://newtown.org.nz> and in our [Newsletter on July 10<sup>th</sup>](#).

**This brings us to the end of the 2020-2021 financial year, but we have been quite active since then.**

### **July 2021**

At the July meeting there was discussion of the Spatial Plan decisions, and of the upcoming District Plan consultation. A Wellington-wide umbrella group is being formed to promote density done well, and the meeting supported the motion *That the Newtown Residents Association welcome the development of Density Done Well and would like to keep in touch with this group.*

The District Plan is a City Council document, but is guided by Government policy. The GPS-HUD, the Government's proposal for the future of the housing and urban development system in Aotearoa New Zealand, was open for consultation. The meeting supported the motion *That the Association put in a submission to this consultation that is reflective of the discussion at this meeting.*

The meeting also supported the motion *That the Newtown Residents' Association would like to request that the responsible dog owner policy applications start at the same time as notification for licensing occurs.*

The future of the now closed Newtown Workingmens' Bowling Club, on Town Belt Land in Owen St, was discussed and the meeting supported the continued mixed community use of the land and buildings.

As agreed, we made a Submission on July 30<sup>th</sup> to Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on the development of the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD).

### **August 2021**

In early August we had email discussion about the WCC Trading and Events in Public Places Policy. We were supportive of many aspects of the policy and submitted our thoughts on August 16<sup>th</sup>, the deadline being shortly before our monthly meeting.

We had our monthly meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> August.

At the meeting our local ward councillors, who had been unable to attend the July meeting, affirmed their willingness to meet and discuss the Spatial Plan process and outcome. Next steps in the consultations were outlined.

Climate change: Patrick Morgan led a brief discussion related to the steps we could take as individuals and as a community.

Wellington Residents Coalition request: The coalition would like to work with the Newtown Residents' Association in the areas of housing, water and rates. We have agreed to send a representative. There are differing views in our membership on the desirability of water metering.

Laura Rosier history book: Martin Hanley brought a print-out of the first 5 chapters to the meeting.

James Cotterill, a musician and music events producer, outlined his plans for a free music festival (12pm to early evening) in Carrara Park on the 2nd of October (Mental Health week). He has a line up of artists willing to contribute, and the plans so far include activities for children, food and music. Rhona proposed using unspent Neighbours' Day funding to support the event. This was unanimously approved.

The meeting turned out to be the day before a new Covid case was announced in Auckland and the whole country went into level 4 lockdown. We have since returned to level 2, but we expect to be at the level for a while yet, and this has led to rescheduling the Mental Health Awareness week event till November 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Other Activities during 2020-2021**

#### **Wellington South Community Liaison Group**

I have continued as the Association's representative at the monthly Wellington South Community Liaison Group meetings, organised in turn by the coordinators at the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre, the Berhampore Community Centre and the Island Bay Community Centre. I value the community connections that have been established through being part of this group.

### **Wellington Residents' Association Network – WRAN**

Representatives of several Residents' Associations have been meeting via Zoom since April 2020, during the first lockdown. This started as a weekly meeting but has been monthly, on the last Monday of a month, since late last year. I have been attending, and the discussion is about issues of shared concern.

### **Wellington City Council Support**

I am pleased to acknowledge the Council's continuing support of the Newtown Residents' Association.

As well as financial support through the operating grant, Newtown has benefitted greatly from having the role of WCC Community Liaison Officer, currently held by Jared Corston, focusing on Newtown issues. Thank you, Jared and the rest of the Community Team, for all your help!

### **Conclusion**

I have now been President for six years, and have continued to find it an interesting and satisfying activity. This has been a challenging year, particularly with the responses to the WCC Spatial Plan. I want to acknowledge Martin Hanley and Anna Kemble Welch, who have gone 'above and beyond' with the work they have put into developing and promoting the alternative housing plan for Newtown. My thanks also to Jane Patterson for her support, to Michelle Wolland, our Treasurer, to Steve Cosgrove for taking notes at our meetings, and to Léonie Walker who has stepped up to help with producing Newsletters and other tasks. In fact I am very grateful to all the Executive members and to everyone who has assisted the Association, by helping with events, responding to emails, contributing to submissions, attending meetings, and in many other ways.

**Rhona Carson**

**President.**

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2021**