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Wellington Town Belt Bill
Parks & Gardens
Wellington City Council
P O Box 2199
Wellington, 6140

17 May 2014

Submission on the Draft Wellington Town Belt Bill

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to my submission.

I am one of many people who has advocated for former Town Belt land to be legally returned to Town Belt status, so I support the Draft Bill's objective in doing this.

I can also appreciate the logic behind land rationalisation of areas of Town Belt taken out for roads under the Public Works Act.

The bill as currently drafted, goes far beyond these aims. If passed into law, in my opinion it will radically change the status and protection of the Town Belt. I therefore oppose the Bill as it is currently drafted.

I am concerned the document provided by WCC refers to the council having 'relatively broad powers' to manage the Town Belt, albeit in accordance with the Town Belt Management Plan. We have seen in recent times a proposed educational facility and further buildings on the Town Belt receiving significant council support, in spite of their being contrary to the current management plan.

It would seem a reasonable conclusion from this that the council's objectives are somewhat at variance to the current management plan and to the existing deed. The draft bill would appear to confirm this. The supplied document states the management plan will be subject to ongoing review at least every ten years, hence the management plan will be subject to the will of the council at that point in time. We cannot therefore foresee what that will be in the management plan in the future, just that the document states that it will be binding.

Since the inception of the TownBbelt, many persons, organisations and groups have sought (often successfully) to annex Town belt for their own purposes. This is not to say, that those purposes in many instances were not admirable in themselves.

A survey undertaken by WCC indicated the majority of Wellingtonians wanted the Town belt retained as open space.

I am not convinced the current legislation will achieve this goal or is even intended to do so.

The Council document states the Town Belt will be protected from uncertainties that could arise in the future providing the Town belt is removed from the Reserves Act .It is difficult to see how this will improve protection of the Town Belt, rather I fear it will simplify facilitate further development on the Town Belt.

Under the current deed the council organisation manages the Town Belt on behalf of the trustees but it does not have beneficial ownership of the land. This will change under the proposed legislation. .

Legislation based on this bill would allow the council to carry on or undertake "any activity or business, or enter into any transaction" on the Town Belt and for the purposes of the above; would give the council "full rights, powers and privileges".

The current council may well intend to care-take the wonderful heritage of the town belt but this

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proposed legislation may not protect it in the future unless changes are made
I see no good reason to remove the Wellington Zoo or Botanic gardens from the Town Belt. Zoos in their current form are becoming somewhat of an anachronism in today's world. It is likely in the future a Zoo may come to mean something very different, just as museums have come to mean something very different from even 25 years ago. We can only speculate what will happen to the zoo land if it is no longer required in its current form and does not have the protection of Town Belt status.

The original Town Belt has important historical and cultural value to the people of Wellington and to wider New Zealand

I request that further careful consideration is given to the implications of this proposed legislation.

Thank you

Lorraine Smith