

SCOPING PAPER FOR THE REVIEW OF THE WELLINGTON WATERFRONT FRAMEWORK

1. Purpose of Report

This report proposes an initial process of discovery to better understand any issues with Wellington's waterfront prior to scoping up the review of the waterfront framework. This initial work will determine the extent and nature of any change required to the current framework.

2. Executive Summary

The Wellington Waterfront Framework sets out a vision, principles and values to guide development of the space. It was adopted in 2001 following extensive public consultation.

A decade on, the waterfront has emerged as a popular destination within the city. It offers high quality open spaces, a variety of cultural, social and recreational destinations, and an enhanced built form.

There are also aspects that have yet to be implemented.

The Council has asked that a review of the framework be undertaken. The underlying question being: do the values contained in the framework continue to reflect the outcomes desired for this important part of the city.

This report proposes a process for assessing this and associated questions. The proposed approach is in two parts: an initial discovery exercise followed by a decision on the extent and focus of any review.

Research already carried out tells us that Wellingtonians are strongly attached to the waterfront. While many people would like to see improvements to the various spaces along the waterfront, these improvements are broadly in keeping with the values and principles already set out in the current framework. They generally relate to how the framework is implemented as opposed to the framework itself. Further exploration is required to determine if there has been

a change in the value Wellingtonians place on the waterfront and how they would like to see it develop going forward.

The aim of this initial assessment is to understand what Wellingtonians value about the waterfront and how these values may have evolved over the past 10 years since the framework was created. The values identified in the framework are:

- expression of heritage and history
- expression of Maori heritage and presence
- sense of place for Wellingtonians
- diversity of experience
- sense of collective ownership and involvement
- experience of space and openness
- ease of access for all

The work will highlight any issues with the waterfront, both in terms of its current and future form and uses. We need to better understand the role and function the waterfront plays in the city as a whole and which areas work well and which do not.

The proposed assessment includes a series of independently facilitated focus groups with Wellington residents, businesses and those who work in the central city. Officers will also meet with businesses along the waterfront and the Waterfront Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to discuss their views and assess any other research carried out on the Waterfront in recent years. Once this work is complete, a workshop with councillors will discuss the information gathered and a way forward.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Agree the outlined approach to the review of the framework namely a discovery exercise to better understand any issues with Wellington's waterfront followed by an assessment of the scope and extent of any review.*

4. Background

The Council agreed in December 2010 to review separately the mechanism for implementing the development of the waterfront (The Wellington Waterfront Company) and the Wellington Waterfront Framework.

The Council has agreed to retain the implementation company, but with a smaller budget in light of the reduced workload that has resulted from the economic downturn. The focus now turns to the framework.

The Wellington Waterfront Framework 2001 was prepared after a period of intense public debate about the future of the waterfront. The framework is intended to provide certainty to the Wellington community, but at the same time allow a level of flexibility for future years. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to provide a framework of values, principles and objectives within which decisions can be made.

The waterfront continues to be a source of debate. Some of the key elements that are raised include:

- an uncertain planning and regulatory environment¹
- difficulty in meeting the principle that all ground floors of buildings will be predominantly accessible to the public
- connections with the city
- timing of developments and their relationship to the financial viability of the waterfront
- the balance of open space to built form.

Since the framework was prepared, the city has changed and will continue to change. For example, many more people live in the central city now than ten years ago. A trend that is expected to continue. As is the international trend towards integrating waterfronts into cities – to move away from them being destinations to being an integral part of the city.

It is recommended that these elements be explored in more depth to guide an assessment of the framework. This work will be supplemented by a review of research undertaken to date.

5. Recent research and consultation on the waterfront

Research carried out last year exploring the values and functions of public spaces in Wellington's CBD found that Wellingtonians are strongly attached to the waterfront and see it as the ultimate multi-purpose recreation and leisure destination². This view is also reflected in a users survey carried out in 2008³ which shows very high satisfaction with the waterfront and the recent developments along it. This survey also showed that 43% of respondents visit the waterfront at least once a week and 97% agree that it provides a lovely place to walk, run or bike.

¹Proposed District Plan Variation 11 was publicly notified on 1 February 2009 for the purpose of providing a framework for the consideration of new building development within identified areas of the waterfront and in particular in the North Kumutoto area. Three appeals were lodged against the decision. Mediation is underway, but an Environment Court hearing may still be required to settle one or more of the appeals.

² 2010, May: Exploring Public Space Values and Functions. Research carried out by Litmus on behalf of Wellington City Council. This research involved focus groups with Wellingtonians to explore public space values and functions within and near the Golden Mile.

³ 2008, March: Wellington Waterfront General Users Survey. Research carried out by UMR on behalf of WWL. This research involved a telephone survey with 750 Wellingtonians.

This confirms the view expressed by many of those who responded to the initial ‘Wellington 2040 – the future of our central city’ consultation⁴ carried out in December 2009. Half of the respondents indicated that the waterfront was their favourite place in Wellington’s central city. This is a large area and some sub-areas within it were also nominated as particular favourites (Oriental Parade, Waitangi Park and Frank Kitts Park). The main reasons given for the waterfront as the overall favourite place were its proximity to the CBD and water’s edge, and the variety and size of spaces contained within this area of the central city. The waterfront is considered a vibrant place, with areas for a variety of outdoor activities, and well considered and appreciated public art. ‘It is so beautiful, a mixture of architecture, art and creatively built structures and the wonderful harbour’.

There were many suggestions for improvements to the waterfront – such as providing more performance space, allowing for more licensed cafes and public entertainment in the evenings. With current and proposed development, emphasis upon improving the amount of activity occurring at the street level of a building (often known as ‘active edges’) and maintaining the buildings already on the waterfront was strongly desired. Respondents’ vision for the waterfront in 2040 features all the above improvements with the addition of reduced vehicle traffic and increased pedestrian activity, low scale buildings and more family-focused activities.

However, of greatest concern to respondents who commented on the waterfront are the developments proposed for it. Their concern centred on the height of the proposed buildings and also their cumulative effect of privatising the waterfront. One improvement repeatedly raised was to prioritise pedestrian access to the waterfront promenade, as at present Aotea, Jervois and Customhouse Quays and Cable Street are seen as barriers.

The findings from all of these pieces of research and consultation indicate that the values Wellingtonians place on the waterfront have not changed significantly since the current framework was put in place. Further investigation will confirm whether this is the case, or highlight if there are some important changes occurring.

6. Proposed approach

It is proposed that the following combination of focus groups, interviews and workshops are used to identify any issues people have with the values outlined in the current Waterfront Framework and how they are playing out in the space:

Who	How	Why
Public	Five focus groups:	We already know that the waterfront is

⁴ 2009, December: Wellington 2040, the future of our central city. Risks, opportunities, and priorities facing Wellington’s central city. This research invited Wellingtonians to complete a questionnaire and provide feedback.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students/ other young people who live/work in the area – aged between 18 and 25 ○ People working in CBD and surrounding areas ○ Families who use the waterfront for leisure ○ Older people – aged 65 plus ○ Business owners in the CBD and surrounding areas. 	highly valued by Wellingtonians and there are diverse views on how it should be developed. Focus groups will enable us to better understand why people value the waterfront – in essence they will provide a more in-depth and nuanced assessment.
Waterfront business owners	Workshops – one for each of the five waterfront precincts	Each precinct on the waterfront will have slightly different issues as different types of businesses operate in each one. An open meeting in each of these areas will enable these differences to emerge.
Technical Advisory Group (TAG)	Workshop	An open discussion will enable TAG to feed any of their concerns into the review.
Wellington Waterfront Ltd	Interviews	
Known interested parties	Focus group	An open discussion will enable these groups to feed any of their concerns into the review.

The focus groups, interviews and workshops will answer the following questions:

- How do people and businesses value Wellington’s waterfront and how has this changed over the past ten years?
- Which spaces along the waterfront work well and which do not, and why?
- Do people compare Wellington’s waterfront to other cities? If so, which cities and how do we compare?
- What role and function does the waterfront play in the CBD and Wellington as a whole?
- How do people see the waterfront evolving over the next ten years? What will be important to retain? What needs improving?

The results of this work will feed into a workshop with councillors. Councillors will discuss the extent and nature of any further review in this workshop. This will include a discussion about any resources required to carry out the review which is currently not planned for.

7. Timeline

The following timeline is recommended:

Action	When
Focus groups, workshops and interviews carried out to identify any issues with the current Wellington Waterfront Framework	May 2011
Workshop with councillors	June 2011
Report back to SPC with recommended approach	July 2011

8. Conclusion

The Wellington Waterfront Framework has been in place for ten years. This report has outlined an approach for carrying out an initial assessment of the framework to identify any issues with the current approach. This work will inform the nature and scale of any further review work.

Contact Officers:

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Supporting Information
<p>1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome <i>The Waterfront contributes to the following Council outcomes:</i> <i>More Liveable – Wellington will be a great place to be, offering a variety of places to live, work and play within a high quality environment.</i> <i>Stronger sense of place – Wellington will have a strong local identity that celebrates and protects its sense of place, capital-city status, distinctive landform and landmarks, defining features, history, heritage buildings, places and spaces.</i> <i>More eventful – Wellington will maximise the economic value from promoting and hosting high-profile events.</i> <i>More Prosperous – Wellington’s urban form, and flexible approach to land use planning in the central city, will contribute to economic growth and prosperity.</i></p>
<p>2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact <i>C378 Wellington Waterfront Project</i> <i>A312 Wellington Waterfront operations</i> <i>CX131 Wellington Waterfront development.</i> <i>The outcome of the review could impact all 3 annual plan projects.</i></p>
<p>3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations <i>Maori have had a long connection with the harbour and waterfront that continues today. There are several sites of significance for iwi around the waterfront including Waitangi Lagoon and Te Aro Pa.</i></p>
<p>4) Decision-Making <i>This is not a significant decision. The report deals with a strategic asset, but does not propose any changes to the asset.</i></p>
<p>5) Consultation a) General Consultation <i>Consultation is proposed as part of this assessment. Any feedback will be reported to SPC.</i> b) Consultation with Maori <i>Representatives from Council’s mana whenua Treaty partners – Wellington Tenth’s Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira were involved in the development of the Wellington Waterfront Framework. They will be included in agreement of the Framework.</i></p>
<p>6) Legal Implications <i>There are no implications from this report.</i></p>
<p>7) Consistency with existing policy <i>This report is consistent with existing WCC policy on the waterfront.</i></p>