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Town Belt – the issues

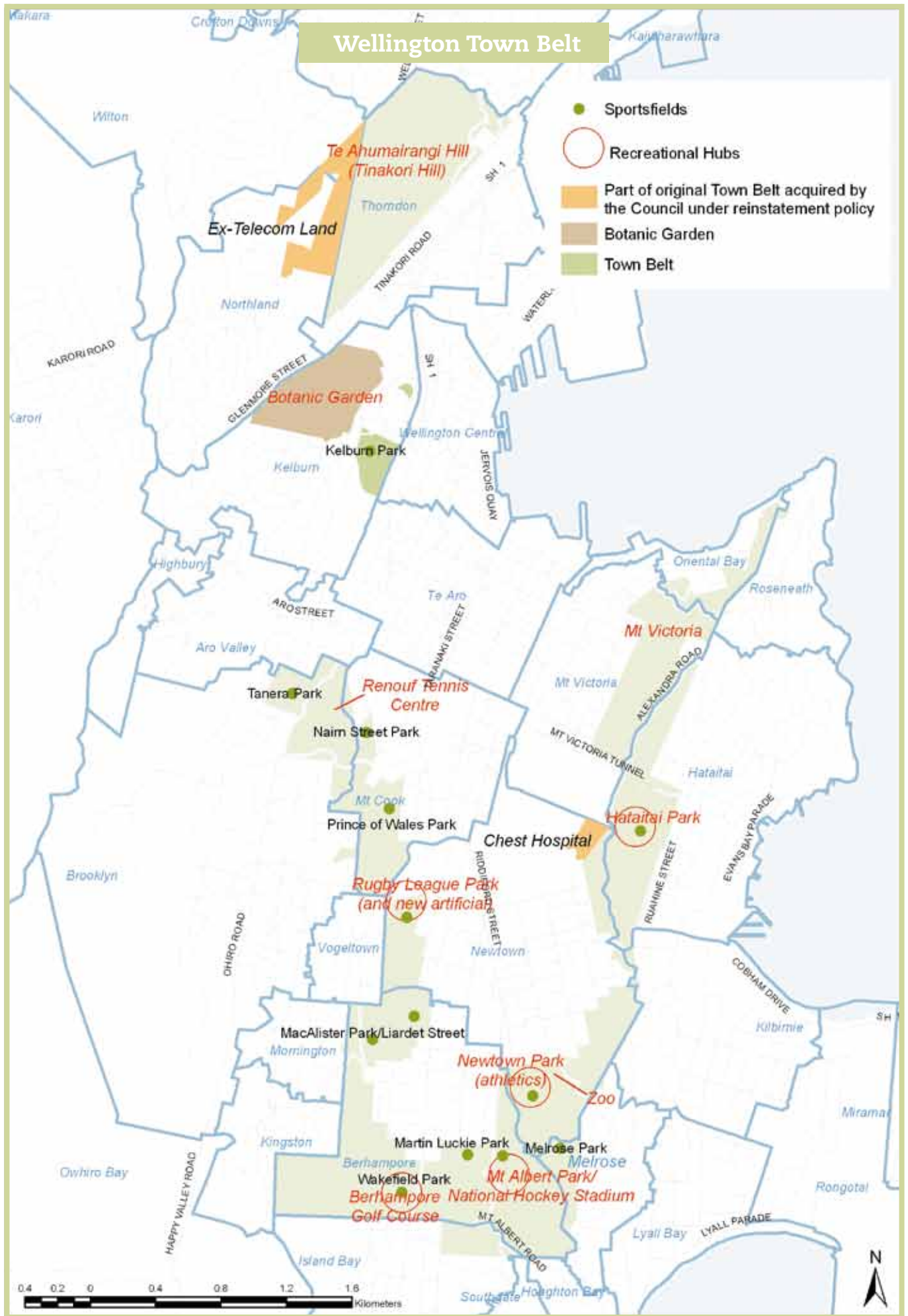


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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Wellington



Town Belt – the issues

This booklet contains information for people participating in Town Belt management principles workshops. It doesn't present options but has background and examples to assist you to collectively develop principles that could be used to guide the future use and management of the Town Belt.

The process for deriving Town Belt principles

You are participating in one of two Town Belt management principles workshops for members of the public and representatives of groups with an interest in the Town Belt.

These workshops will develop a series of draft principles that could be used to guide the Council in its day-to-day management of this important resource. The draft principles from the workshops will be developed into a report to the Council and will form the basis of a discussion document that the wider community can comment on. (Details of the proposed schedule for the development of the principles and the review of the Town Belt Management Plan can be found on the last page of this document.)

At these workshops you will be discussing the purpose of the Town Belt and some of the management issues the Council faces, as well as considering views about the Town Belt that may be different to your own. As part of this, you must carefully weigh up these other views, look at the positives, possible downsides and consider trade-offs.

Workshops and issues

Each workshop will have 15 or more participants and will last for about three hours.

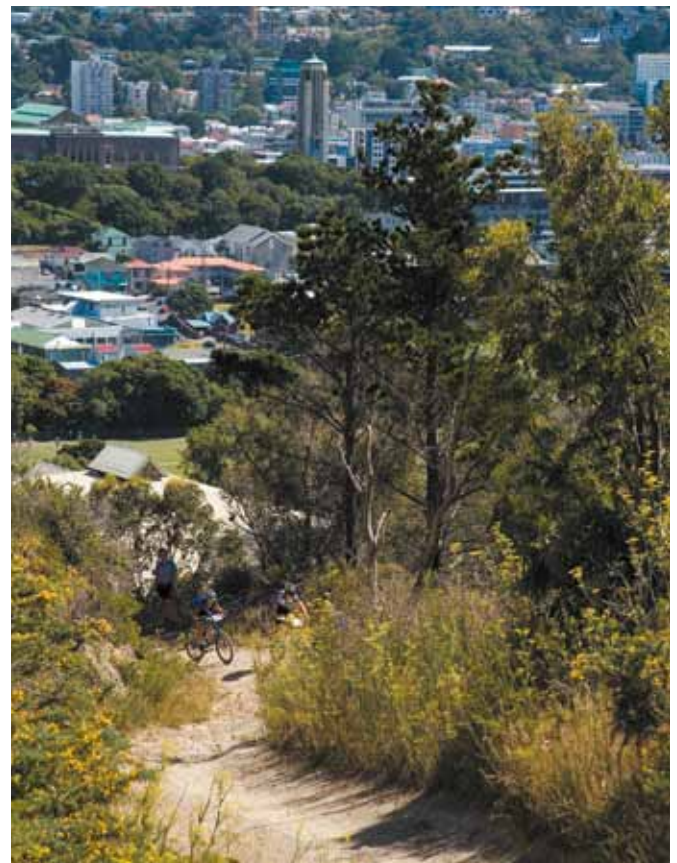
We're providing this booklet before the workshops so participants have time to think about the management issues and are aware of the different community views. It will be up to you as a group to consider the kind of principles that could work.

To help, we're suggesting three possible approaches to the Town Belt. Although these approaches are hypothetical and reflect only some of the very differing community views, we think they will be a useful starting point for discussion.

Principles for the Town Belt

Unlike similar land management plans, the Town Belt Management Plan does not set out how the goals in the plan can be achieved. Guiding principles are a feature of most modern management plans and are a good way to enable community aspirations and values to be reflected in day-to-day management of reserves.

To ensure that the Town Belt can be managed in a way that better reflects community values, Wellington City Council is proposing to develop a number of guiding principles to include in the draft Town Belt Management Plan and/or future legislation. We are seeking your help to develop these.





What is the Town Belt?

During the early 19th century, overcrowding and poor living conditions in England's industrial cities prompted social reformers to call for green and open spaces as a means of improving the health and well-being of citizens. This open space was called the 'lungs' of a city.

When the plans for Wellington City were originally being developed, the New Zealand Company, a private land-settlement company, wanted to avoid similar problems here by consciously providing public green space. Public good was not the only motivation, however. The New Zealand Company also wanted to keep land prices high in the 'town acres' of the new settlement. In this way, it could ensure good returns for its investors and preserve a social hierarchy – those who could not afford to buy high-priced land would form a lower class labour force. The Town Belt, with the added provision that 'it was not to be built upon', would achieve these purposes by distancing the cheaper 'country' sections and maintaining demand for the 'town acres'.

The Town Belt was originally set aside from land included in the Port Nicholson Deed of Purchase. Despite questions about the validity of purchase, in 1841, Governor Hobson proclaimed the Town Belt a Crown reserve and directed that a notice be published in the New Zealand Gazette requiring "all persons occupying public or native reserves to vacate those sites". He also declared that "all persons are warned not to clear, fence, cultivate or build in or upon any portion of the belt of reserved land surrounding the town".

The Crown held the land from 1841 to 1871 when it was transferred to the City of Wellington under the Wellington City Reserves Act 1871. The Town Belt Deed, signed in 1873, set out how the city was to manage the land – and that deed remains the guiding document today. Any changes to the deed, or clarification of its powers, requires legislative change.

Since 1841, the growth of Wellington City has meant that over a third of the land originally designated for Town Belt has been taken for community purposes. Significant portions of the Town Belt were lost for predominantly Crown uses. These included land for Wellington College, the Governor General's residence, Victoria University, Wellington Hospital, and various roads linking the inner city with the suburbs.

Today, the Town Belt is a significant natural feature that provides a scenic backdrop to the inner city and offers many recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. The Town Belt is managed as a reserve through the Town Belt Management Plan 1995.

History of

Before the arrival of European colonists, the Town Belt land was under the kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of the resident iwi/hapu. The earliest documented description and pictures of the Town Belt have the land covered in forest with the slopes of Mt Victoria/Tangi te keo covered in kanuka shrubland.



1884
Pirie planting
on Mt Victoria
Alexander
Turnbull Library
GB2237 1/1 detail



1907
Brooklyn Road
looking towards
Mt Victoria
Alexander
Turnbull Library
G25451 1/1



1931
Alexandra Road,
looking south
to Mt Albert
Alexander
Turnbull Library
G90002 1/2



Planting at
Mt Victoria lookout.

the Town Belt

August 1839

The New Zealand Company instructed William Mein Smith, its surveyor, that “the whole of the town inland should be separated by a broad belt of land ... to be public property on condition that no buildings be ever erected on it”.

September 1839

The New Zealand Company sought to purchase land in and around Wellington Harbour. Its representatives negotiated the Port Nicholson Deed under which they claimed to have ‘bought’ the harbour, Whanganui-a-Tara, and surrounding hills from the Māori of Pito-one and Nga-ū-ranga.

The deed, however, was drafted only in English and although it included a description of the boundaries of the purchased land, it did not include a map. The deed also provided that a tenth portion of the land conveyed by the New Zealand Company would be reserved for local Māori, although this was never effectively implemented.

1840

The New Zealand Company settlement was established in an area around the mouth of the Hutt River. After three months, however, the settlement site at Petone was declared “quite unfit for a town” and there was increased interest in moving the settlement to its present location.

The first record of the Town Belt was a plan of Wellington (finalised by Mein Smith in August 1840). This marked the Town Belt as “land ... reserved for the enjoyment of the public and not to be built upon”.

1841

Although the land had not been validly obtained from local Māori, the Crown assumed ownership of the Town Belt area (approximately 625 hectares) and proclaimed the land a public reserve without compensation.

Governor Hobson directed that a notice be published in the New Zealand Gazette requiring anyone occupying public or native reserves to vacate those sites, and declaring that “all persons are warned not to clear, fence, cultivate or build in or upon any portion of the belt of reserved land surrounding the town”.

Although the Māori communities of Te Aro, Kumototo and Pipitea had not been party to the earlier land purchases, the settlers moved in and effectively forced the displacement of those people.

1852-1873

Over this period, one third of the Town Belt was lost to community and social welfare needs, housing, roads and public works. Some of the land set aside as hospital and orphanage reserve was later sold as residential sections or claimed for road works.

1873

The remaining Town Belt was transferred from the Crown to the City of Wellington under the Wellington City Reserves Act 1871. The 1873 Town Belt Deed set out the terms and conditions under which the city was to manage the land. The Council, as Trustee, holds the Town Belt for the charitable objectives set out in that deed. In particular, it was “to be forever hereafter used and appropriated as a public recreation grounds for the inhabitants of the City of Wellington”.

1873-1959

As the city grew, roads were developed across Town Belt land and certain areas were leased for use by sports clubs. Management of the Town Belt was generally ad hoc until the first land management plan in 1981.

1908

The Wellington (City) Town Belt Reserves Act was passed, allowing the Council to lease only up to 100 acres (40.47 hectares) of Town Belt for recreational purposes provided that not more than four-fifths of the land was set apart exclusively for playing fields and that public access was maintained. By 1910, Newtown Park, Nairn Street Park, Kelburn Park, and Wakefield Park had all been constructed.

1959

The Wellington City Exhibition Grounds Act authorised the Council to grant a 21-year lease with perpetual right of renewal to the Wellington Show Association, over 5.6 hectares of the Town Belt, as an exhibition site.

1994

The Council approved the current Town Belt Management Plan. The plan provides a policy framework for managing and developing the Town Belt.

1998

The Town Belt Reinstatement Policy was approved by the Council. This outlined the Council's approach to the recovery of land that had been in the original Town Belt and its reinstatement in the Town Belt. See page 7 ‘The issues – guiding principles for the Town Belt’ for further detail.

1998-2008

During this time some of the original sections of Town Belt were recovered: Telecom land, Te Ahumairangi Hill (formerly called Tinakori Hill) – 18.63 hectares and Chest Hospital – 2.4 hectares

2009

The Port Nicholson Block (Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika) Claims Settlement Act 2009 came into force on 2 September, signed by the Crown and the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (representing descendants of tupuna of Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāti Tama and holding a kaitiaki role for Ngāti Mutunga).



The impact of the Town Belt Management Plan

The Town Belt Management Plan is believed to have been a success for a number of reasons:

- 1 There has been no further loss of Town Belt land, and encroachments on the Town Belt have been more effectively identified and monitored. Some major encroachments have been resolved, such as the Presbyterian Support Services easement in Berhampore.
- 2 Increased recreational use of the Town Belt has been possible while protecting the land from any further development.
- 3 The managed vegetation on the Town Belt has flourished, largely as a result of protection by the Council, weed and possum-control programmes and the great work of volunteer groups.
- 4 The managed vegetation on the Town Belt has, over time, been gradually changing from pine trees to native forest. Over 26 hectares of exotic trees (mainly pines) have been removed and replanted with native species in accordance with the Town Belt Management Plan.

Improved access and events for recreational enjoyment include:

- City to Sea walkway
- Mt Victoria track upgrades and mountain bike circuit
- International mountain bike championships
- World running championships

Improvements to visitor and sporting facilities include:

- Mt Victoria lookout
- Te Ahumairangi Hill (Tinakori Hill) landscape plan
- Central Park redevelopment
- Newtown Park
- Rugby League Park
- National Hockey Stadium parking
- Development of two artificial sports fields at Wakefield Park

- A possum-control programme covers the entire Town Belt.
- A weed-control programme for the Town Belt targets, in particular, old man's beard, banana passion fruit and climbing asparagus.

Places where exotic trees have been replaced include:

- Te Ahumairangi Hill
- Telford Terrace (above Oriental Bay)
- Finnimore Terrace (in Vogeltown)
- Owen Street (in Newtown)



The issues – guiding principles for the Town Belt

For more than 100 years, the Town Belt has been a regular destination for many individuals and families living in Wellington. Many people, however, have different views on how the Town Belt should be managed and what this land should be used for.

Describing the Town Belt

When we talk about the Town Belt, it is important to be clear about what land it actually includes. The Town Belt comprises 420 hectares, including 387 hectares covered by the Town Belt Deed, 25 hectares of botanic gardens and various other small areas. Over the years, however, there have been different interpretations of what land the Town Belt should include. The three main interpretations are:

- 1 The current Town Belt** – this is the Town Belt as it stands today and that most Wellingtonians are familiar with.
- 2 The pre-Deed or original Town Belt** – this incorporates the original 625 hectares outlined in the 1840 town plan. Under this interpretation, land identified in the original 1840 plan would be returned and reinstated if and when it became available from the Crown. The Town Belt Reinstatement Policy identifies several pieces of original Town Belt, including part of Wellington College and Wellington East Girls College land.



- 3 An extended Town Belt** – this interpretation incorporates the current Town Belt and other sections of land (some of which were in the original 1840 town plan and some which were not but could be seen to add value to it, such as the green belts running between the Town Belt and the south coast). This interpretation would need to be considered on the basis of whether these areas are already covered by other management plans and what would be gained by making them Town Belt land.

The Town Belt Reinstatement Policy

In 1998, the Council instigated a policy to obtain specific sections of land that had previously been in the Town Belt and reinstate them. Some of the identified areas were purchased by the Council. However, these have not yet been legally reinstated into the Town Belt because reinstatement needs legislative change through Parliament.

When considering future reinstatement the Council needs to consider:

- the significant cost to the ratepayer of acquiring the land, particularly when sites are close to the city centre
- the 2009 treaty settlement of Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika giving them first right of first refusal for some of the remaining identified sections of ex-Town Belt land still held by the Crown.

These things mean the policy needs to be reconsidered.



Recreation on the Town Belt

Use of the Town Belt is guided by the 1873 Town Belt Deed. Because of its age and archaic legal language, this deed can be a difficult document to interpret. However, there is a clear intent for the land to be “forever hereafter used and appropriated as a public recreation ground”.

Although the intent of ‘recreational purpose’ is clear in the deed, attempting to decide what is (and what is not) a ‘recreational activity’ and whether it should be permitted on the Town Belt is not so straightforward. Definitions of ‘recreation’ change over time and, in 1873, were likely to have meant something different to present-day interpretations. Many modern recreational activities (such as nordic walking, mountain biking and others) were not even conceived of at that time and it is also unclear whether leisure activities such as gardening would be classed as recreation.

The lack of guidance in the deed on recreational activities means that it is up to the Council to try to work out what is – and what is not – permissible. In an attempt to clarify some of the recreational activities permitted, the Town Belt Management Plan defined two different types of recreation:

- **Formal:** These are activities that generally involve groups of people in events which require prior organisation and, frequently, make use of specially designated facilities such as playing surfaces or sports buildings (eg structured football, netball, rugby, bowling games etc)
- **Informal:** These are activities which can be spontaneous and do not require specialised sports facilities (eg walking, ambling, unplanned kick around/ soccer etc).

Formal recreational activities are more associated with regular exercise while informal recreational activities are more associated with closeness to/enjoyment of the natural environment.

The Town Belt Management Plan interprets the Town Belt Deed to mean that activities on the Town Belt should focus on outdoor informal recreation. It recognises, however, that many clubs carry out formal (indoor and outdoor) recreational activities on the land.

The problem of defining what is and isn’t recreation has led to some conflict at times over the type of recreation activity permitted – as the Bandoliers Building demonstrated.

The Bandoliers Building, Mt Victoria

The Bandoliers Building, located at the top of Majoribanks Street, next to the Mt Victoria Bowling Club, used to be leased by the Bandoliers Marching Team. When the team disbanded, freeing up the building, the Council advertised its availability to the community and was approached by the Innermost Garden Group to use it as a community garden and the Crossways Crèche Committee to use it as a crèche.

Another interest group argued that the building should be removed in accordance with the 1995 Town Belt Management Plan and that a crèche was not allowed as it was not a recreational activity. There was also support within the community for the crèche option, particularly with the loss of another similar facility in that area. This created a lot of public debate but, following legal advice, the Council decided that a crèche was not a recreational activity.

The grounds surrounding the Bandoliers Building are now used by the community garden group and the building can be booked for casual use.



Definitions of ‘recreation’ change over time ... Many modern recreational activities (such as nordic walking, mountain biking and others) were not even conceived of at that time and it is also unclear whether leisure activities such as gardening would be classed as recreation.

This problem with defining what recreational activities are permitted on the Town Belt becomes more complex when evaluating indoor activities. The 1840 plan of Wellington states that land was to be “reserved for the enjoyment of the public and not to be built upon”. However, while it was the original intention of the New Zealand Company Secretary that there should be no building on the Town Belt, this stipulation was not included in the 1873 Town Belt Deed and the intention was not complied with over subsequent years. Between 1873 and 1995, a large number of recreational clubs leased land and/or buildings on Town Belt land.

However, since the introduction of the Town Belt Management Plan in 1995, the policies on ‘Structure and Furniture’ have been more closely aligned with the original 1840 intention. This policy states that “the necessity for all buildings and structures will be progressively reassessed” and “structures, buildings and furniture which are no longer required shall be removed as soon as practicable”. The recreation policy states “no additional land area developed for organised sports facilities”.

This means that those recreational clubs that currently lease land/ buildings on the Town Belt may find it hard to expand their facilities and development of indoor facilities will be difficult even if there is increased demand from the community.

Leased land on the Town Belt

There are about 40 formal recreational clubs located on the Town Belt. These range from scout clubs and gun clubs to various sports clubs (eg the National Hockey Stadium – Mount Albert Park Hockey Club, Berhampore Bowling Club, athletics, tennis clubs). Most of these clubs have leases for buildings and/or areas of land that are not generally accessible by the public (although members of the public are permitted to join the club). Many of these clubs also hire out their facilities on a casual basis.

Under the Town Belt Management Plan, leases can be provided for up to 10 years with 10-year rights of renewal.



Mana whenua and the Town Belt

From 1840, when the first New Zealand Company ships began to arrive at Port Nicholson (Wellington), conflict quickly escalated between local Māori (mana whenua) and new settlers. Land inhabited by mana whenua was invalidly 'purchased' by the New Zealand Company and sold to settlers. As settler numbers increased, mana whenua were forcibly displaced and their lands – including that area of land now known as the Town Belt – taken.

Few Wellingtonians walking on the Town Belt today are aware that the land was taken by the Crown without compensation. Following their initial displacement and the subsequent loss of almost all their land, mana whenua struggled repeatedly to obtain the return of their lands through legal means without success.

For more than 150 years following their initial displacement, little progress was made to resolve the grievances of mana whenua in Wellington and address the historical deprivation they had experienced. The first meaningful Crown reparation process for them occurred in 2003 following the release of the Waitangi Tribunal report *Te Whanganui a Tara me ona Takiwa* on the Wellington District. In this report, the Tribunal concluded that serious breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi by the Crown occurred in the Port Nicholson block, and in particular:

"The Tribunal finds that the Crown, in taking most of the Town Belt land from Māori without their consent or any consultation, and without making any payment, acted in breach of article 2 of the Treaty and failed to respect the rangatiratanga of Māori in and over their land."

The Tribunal recommended that representatives of these groups enter into negotiation with the Crown to settle these grievances.

Following the publication of the 2003 report, the Crown entered into negotiations with the claimants representing the descendants of tupuna of Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāti Tama. The Crown mandated claimant collective was named Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika. After six years of negotiation, the Port Nicholson Block (Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika) Claims Settlement Act 2009 came into force on 2 September 2009 following a signing between the Crown and representatives of Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika.

Under the Crown's Treaty claims process, however (in which the conditions for negotiation are dictated by the Crown), negotiations for the return of land are restricted to Crown-owned land (ie not private or local government-owned land). For this reason, the Town Belt (and other lands onsold or transferred by the Crown) were excluded from negotiations and the subsequent settlement discussions.

At present, Wellington City Council's relationship with mana whenua is managed through a Memorandum of Understanding. Mana whenua have indicated that they wish to be more involved in the future management of the Town Belt. This may require governance arrangements to be agreed between them and the Council.



Issues – and the principles we need to resolve them

In your workshop, you will follow three hypothetical approaches to how people would like to see the Town Belt managed.

These approaches reflect some of the very different perspectives that exist in the community and will be explored in depth to work out the pros and cons of each. It will be an opportunity to see how people feel about the Town Belt and why they feel certain issues are more important than others.



Approach A: The Town Belt is a gift

People who support approach (A) believe that the Town Belt is a 'gift' from the city's founders. For this reason, there is a strong sense that the Town Belt should not only be maintained and protected but restored, where possible, to the original 625 hectares outlined in the 1840 town plan. The supporters of this approach believe that the deed's original 'recreational' intent for the Town Belt should be enshrined in legislation to protect it for future generations.

Under this approach, the Town Belt would retain its 'recreational' status. In terms of permitted activities, there would be a focus on supporting informal outdoor recreation activities (walks, picnics etc) and the land would be rigorously protected to ensure its continuing existence as one of the few remaining undeveloped areas in the inner city where informal recreational activities can take place. Although it is recognised that sections of the Town Belt are already occupied by facilities for formal recreational activities (sports fields, bowling greens, sports club buildings etc) these activities would be restricted to existing activity hubs with no expansion allowed. Where new sport or recreation facilities are required, it would be located off Town Belt land.

When existing recreational facilities or other infrastructure is no longer required, this should be demolished and the area returned as far as possible to its original undeveloped state.

Public access to all areas would be established as a key principle. In particular, there would be no exclusive leasing of Town Belt land and no new buildings or facilities would be constructed. When buildings are no longer in use or considered redundant, they should be demolished or removed.

In addition, with this approach, the environmental management of the Town Belt land should, as far as possible, return the land to its original state with a managed increase in native plantings and management of pest plants and animals.

What can be done?

Implement principles (for example) that:

- the Town Belt be returned, where practical, to its original 1840 size
- only informal recreational activities be permitted on the Town Belt
- no new buildings be permitted on the Town Belt and redundant buildings be removed
- access to the public be permitted across the entire Town Belt etc.

For and against the approach: 'The Town Belt is a gift'

In support:

- The Town Belt will fulfil the 'recreation' function envisaged by the city founders.
- The public will have increased access to Town Belt land.
- The Town Belt will be expanded in size, meaning that there will be more land available for informal recreational activities.
- Wellingtonians' ability to undertake informal recreational activities will be protected from any ongoing increase in formal recreation activities.
- Legislation will guarantee the survival of the Town Belt and ensure access for future generations of Wellingtonians.
- No new buildings will be permitted anywhere on the Town Belt.

In opposition:

- Wellington ratepayers will be obliged to pay significant costs to acquire land lost since 1840.
- It is not always practical to purchase land that used to be on the Town Belt. In some cases, these contain buildings, in others they are very expensive or the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust have first rights of refusal etc.
- Some ratepayers (particularly those in the outer suburbs) may feel they are subsidising a 'personal playground' for the use of others (ie those who live near the Town Belt and can access it easily).
- Existing recreational clubs with a long local history on the Town Belt will be constrained in their ability to expand their activities.
- Alternative sites in the city will be required for new indoor sport activities and other formal recreational activities not permitted on the Town Belt (ie sport halls etc).
- Ratepayers will be obliged to cover the cost of establishing key city infrastructure (utilities/roads etc) in other areas outside the Town Belt.
- No new formal recreational activities would be permitted on the Town Belt.
- It may not be feasible to permit access to all of the Town Belt, particularly where there are existing leases or buildings.

Approach B: Shared cultural values

People who support Approach B acknowledge that the Town Belt was not validly obtained from mana whenua, and that they have been disadvantaged without compensation or redress for over 150 years. They also recognise that mana whenua aspirations for the Town Belt land, as a non-Crown owned property, was excluded from consideration through the Crown's historical grievance settlement process.

Supporters of this approach believe that mana whenua should be offered a more meaningful guardianship role as kaitiaki to ensure that their spiritual and physical relationship with this land – and long-term, holistic aspirations for it – are maintained. Mana whenua would also have a formal decision-making role in the governance arrangements for the Town Belt.

The Town Belt Management Plan should recognise the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document of New Zealand rather than focusing uniquely on the intent of the New Zealand Company, the city founders. By taking on the Treaty principles of partnership, protection and participation, mana whenua needs and values would obtain equal consideration to European-based values.

People who support Approach B believe that the role of the Town Belt would be improved if there was increased recognition of local Māori history and cultural values and practices, such as gardening and the growing and processing of harakeke (flax) on the Town Belt. Supporters believe that Māori cultural practices and values often help create our unique and collective sense of identity.

Supporters of this approach generally agree with a mixed approach to informal and formal recreation on the Town Belt, which benefits both Māori and non-Māori. They are generally against large-scale development and believe that formal recreational activities should be restricted to current areas of activity.

They agree that parts of the Town Belt should be returned to native bush. However, mana whenua should be able to use land to support Māori cultural and recreational activity and fulfil their kaitiaki duties.

Under this approach, the Town Belt Management Plan and policy framework should adhere to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, recognising both Pakeha and Māori culture. The Treaty principles of partnership, protection and participation¹ require that the specific needs of Māori are met and that Māori cultural values and European values are taken equally into account.

Informal recreational activities on the Town Belt would continue. However, there would be an increased emphasis to include additional informal Māori recreational activities (eg gardening and harakeke etc). Formal recreational activities would be restricted to current activity hubs, but some land could be leased to allow formal Māori cultural/recreational activities where appropriate.

Further development of the Town Belt would be opposed, although there would be an increased visual mana whenua presence on Town Belt land.

What can be done?

Introduce a principle (for example) that:

- the Town Belt Management Plan should recognise the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- mana whenua should have a formal decision-making role in the governance and management of the Town Belt
- mana whenua cultural activities be included on the Town Belt
- mana whenua be able to lease/use land on the Town Belt for Māori cultural and recreational activities.

For and against the approach: 'Shared cultural values'

In support:

- The historical wrongs against mana whenua with respect to the Town Belt will be addressed.
- The management of the Town Belt will adhere to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi – the country's founding document.
- Mana whenua input into the Town Belt will contribute to the overall unique identity of the Town Belt.
- Mana whenua have increased ability to practise their cultural activities in the Wellington region.
- Wellingtonians will have an opportunity to interact with and learn about cultural aspects of mana whenua for Wellington City.

In opposition:

- Mana whenua could be considered to have an unequal input into the management of a community asset.
- There could be an increased cost to the ratepayer of facilitating a formal governance process that allows mana whenua input into the management of the Town Belt.
- Mana whenua may want to expand the range of activities on the Town Belt, not adhering to the current activities permitted under the Town Belt Management Plan.

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Social Policy Te Kōmihana a te Karauna mō Ngā Ahuatanga-ā-iwi, April 1988 (Volume II Future Directions, section 4 The Treaty of Waitangi and Principles for Social Policy).

Approach C: A Town Belt for the 21st century

People supporting this approach believe that the city needs to take a more pragmatic approach to using the Town Belt. Although it is recognised that the Town Belt is an important natural asset for the city, equal recognition of the need for community recreation and other activities is also required – particularly given the limited space available within the city and an increasing inner city population.

Supporters of this approach believe that all sections of the Town Belt with an important landscape, biodiversity or other similar value should continue to be protected from any further development. Controlled development on the Town Belt would, however, be permitted in areas of the Town Belt that contain land that has limited biodiversity or landscape values or that are currently used as a hub for recreational activities. This controlled development could include limited additions or expansion to existing facilities for recreational activities where these are considered insufficient or inappropriate for use (eg roofing on outdoor sport facilities such as bowling greens to allow use in bad weather). New buildings to provide recreational activity could be focused on existing activity hubs.

With this approach, the current boundaries for the Town Belt could be expanded and any further additions specifically used to provide an increased range or increased number of recreational activities (or a new recreational activity hub).

Informal recreation could continue to apply throughout the Town Belt, however, within the existing (or new) recreational activity hubs, concentrated formal activities would continue to be permitted.

This may exclude the public from leased areas unless they were users of the facility (or members). Supporters of this approach would also be happy to permit clubs to run limited commercial activities (eg bars/cafés etc) where any money made is returned to support the club's recreational activities. Public access to the Town Belt would continue, but access would be restricted in certain areas (particularly the hubs) where facilities would need to be protected from the threat of vandalism.

Supporters of this approach would also be open to the expansion of permitted activities on the Town Belt to include community activities such as crèches etc. Town Belt land could, where appropriate, be leased to public and private organisations that provide these services or activities.

What can be done?

Introduce a principle (for example) stating that:

- the Town Belt be split into areas – some reserved for natural parks/reserve (no development or construction permitted) and others where restricted development can occur to allow recreational activities
- formal and informal recreational activities can be carried out on the Town Belt
- any new land acquired will be used for formal recreational activities or to provide key community infrastructure for the city
- those areas not considered to be of high landscape, biodiversity or recreational values can be used for critical city infrastructure (utilities/ roads etc).

For and against the approach: 'A Town Belt for the 21st century'

In support:

- The Town Belt will be more effectively fulfilling its 'recreational' function.
- Expansion of the Town Belt could increase the potential for new or expanded recreational activities.
- Wellington residents will have increased use of recreational infrastructure and access to formal recreational activities on the Town Belt (eg sport halls etc).
- The Town Belt could be used for key city community infrastructure (utilities/ roads etc) that might otherwise be extremely expensive or unaffordable.
- There would be more access and use of the Town Belt for recreational activities.
- Roofing of current outdoor facilities would allow for increased use in all weathers.

In opposition:

- There could be a substantial increase in formal recreational activities reducing the ability to enjoy informal recreational activities and nature on the Town Belt.
- Over time, there would be an increase in the construction of buildings on the Town Belt.
- Community activities such as crèches would require changes to the Town Belt Deed
- Ratepayers would be obliged to pay the cost of acquiring the new pieces of land and the subsequent costs of maintaining it.
- Public access to the Town Belt would decrease as additional facilities were developed for exclusive use.
- Commercial operators would be making a personal profit through the use of a public asset.

What happens next?

The draft principles from the three workshops will be developed into a report to the Council and will form the basis of a discussion document for the wider community to comment on.

When community feedback has been received, the principles will be finalised and the Town Belt Management Plan will be reviewed and updated. There will be a separate consultative process for the draft updated Town Belt Management Plan.



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