
REPORT 2
(1215/52/IM)

DRAFT ACCESSIBLE WELLINGTON ACTION PLAN: PROMOTING INCLUSION

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks agreement to release the draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan 2011-2014 (see Appendix 1) for public consultation.

2. Executive Summary

Following extensive early engagement with the Council's Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) and a range of external and internal stakeholders, a draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan, attached as Appendix 1, has been developed for consideration.

The Action Plan will primarily influence the way we do things, rather than add new activities. Actions are not expected to increase capital or operational expenditure and most will also enhance the quality of life for residents and the 'Wellington experience' for visitors.

This report seeks agreement to consult on the draft Action Plan from December 2011 through to the end of February 2012. The launch of the consultation period is planned to launch at the Accessibility Forum on 5 December.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Agree to release the draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan 2011-2014 (see Appendix 1) for public consultation from December 2011 through to February 2012.*
- 3. Delegate to the Social Portfolio Leader, councillor representative on the Accessibility Advisory Group, and the Chief Executive the authority to make minor editorial changes, and further changes to the draft Action Plan as required as a result of decisions of this Committee, prior to its publication.*

4. Background

The Strategy and Policy Committee agreed on 10 June 2010 (*Revised Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Group*) that an accessibility action plan would be scheduled on the SPC forward programme in the new triennium.

4.1 Business need

We want to build on our reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible city that is accessible, safe and easy to get around. This draft Action Plan is to act as our guide

Providing accessible services communication channels, transport, buildings and public spaces can make Wellington City more inclusive for everyone. It enhances the diversity of the city and helps the city remain attractive to residents and visitors of any age or ethnicity.

Adopting the principle of universal design allows us to consider access for all Wellingtonians. This includes people with disabilities as well as parents with children in prams and older people with an age-related decrease in mobility or sensory abilities. An estimated 21,600 working-age Wellingtonians have disabilities (12 percent – Quality of Life Survey 2008) and there are 3500 mobility card holders in Wellington City – most of whom are over 65.

4.2 Early engagement on the draft Action Plan

Early engagement with the AAG (May 2010), more than 95 Council managers and officers (August 2010) and a range of external stakeholders including Mana Whenua (November 2010), has informed the development of this plan. AAG members have had further opportunity to comment on the draft. Awareness was generally strong throughout the Council, and most business units identified ways that services could be readily improved within existing budgets.

5. Discussion

5.1 Structure and implementation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan will primarily influence the way we do things rather than add new activities. It provides a framework for, and outlines the Council's commitment to, universal access. It helps identify access barriers and enhance opportunities for people with disabilities, parents with children in prams, older people with declining mobility or sensory abilities and people of varying ages with temporary mobility restrictions.

Many proposed changes (such as improving the accessibility of documents) could be in place by the beginning of 2012. Others (such as inclusion of New Zealand Sign Language on the Council website) would be gradually introduced over a three-year period.

5.2 Proposed process for adoption and review of the Action Plan

Given the focus on accessibility, it makes sense to run a best practice accessible consultation programme. This includes:

- Effective communication and distribution of the draft plan – a launch at the Accessibility Forum, accessible printed and web-based publications (including an extreme plain-English summary), use of e-networks, promotion through radio programmes focused on disability issues, and in Our Wellington.
- Multiple feedback channels:
 - written submissions either by letter, email, or submission form;
 - participating in workshops designed for gather feedback;
 - with assistance at the Central Library and branch libraries at selected times in 2nd or 3rd week of December;
 - or by leaving voicemail messages on a dedicated phone line
- Excellent feedback on the feedback the Council receives.

Running the process over the Christmas-New Year period provides an opportunity to extend the consultation process so that there is sufficient time for organisations to formally consider the draft plan. The proposed timetable for the consultation is:

December 5	Public consultation on the draft Action Plan begins
December 12-17	
Mid February	Workshop as a feedback channel
February 29	Submissions close
April x	The Council adopts final Action Plan

5.3 Financial Considerations

The Action Plan will primarily influence the way we do things rather than add new activities. Actions are not expected to increase capital or operational expenditure in the coming year, although changes to training or recruitment, or additional resources to support work programmes, may be required over time.

Some actions may create financial capacity (eg coordination to reduce the need for remedial work), and some may increase revenue (eg increasing event attendance by making it accessible). Most will enhance the quality of life for residents and the 'Wellington experience' for visitors. The marginal cost of making an existing project accessible can be nil or very small.

5.4 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

The proposal is consistent with improving access to public and active-mode transport for people with disabilities and their carers.

5.5 Long Term Plan Considerations

The draft Action Plan's primary connection to the long-term plan would be by acting as a prompt for accessibility considerations to be incorporated into activity plans.

6. Conclusion

Following significant early engagement, a draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan is attached for release for public consultation.

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Supporting information

1) Strategic Fit/Strategic Outcome

The Council's approach to accessibility is included in ten LTCCP 2009-19 Community outcomes, traversing all strategies. Improved accessibility is supported by the Council's priorities:

- Maintaining Wellington's inclusive culture.
- Facilitating tolerance and inclusiveness.
- Promoting participation in sport and recreation activities.
- Facilitating a supportive environment for artistic and cultural expression.
- Maintaining the transport network to ensure it remains efficient.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

The proposed changes will not lead to any increase in capital or operational expenditure in the coming year. The proposals include actions which would undergo public consultation before prioritisation. If consequently prioritised, financial implications would be considered through the Annual Plan process.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

The proposals have no implications for the Treaty.

4) Decision-Making

The Council is being asked to agree to consult on a draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan. The decision does not reach the threshold for significance under the Council's Significance Policy or under the Local Government Act 2002 as:

- The proposed actions do not reach the threshold for cost significance.
- The proposed actions affecting Council activities generally involve only minor changes to business-as-usual. Improvements to services would be gradual. Actions that need new funding would be proposed through business unit planning and the Annual Plan process.
- Considerable targeted engagement has already been completed. This included representatives from the residents and visitors likely to benefit considerably from the proposals.
- Mana Whenua have been included in the engagement process.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

AAG members, Council managers and targeted stakeholders have contributed to the development of the draft Action Plan. The draft Action Plan would be considered again as part of the Annual Plan process.

b) Consultation with Māori

Māori with disabilities and their carers will have an interest in the draft Action Plan and will be targeted in the public consultation process. Mana Whenua were included in the pre-engagement workshops, who supported the use of a triple bottom-line decision making process and incorporating environmental considerations and sustainability into the draft plan.

6) Legal Implications

The proposals are consistent with relevant legislation and have no legal implications.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The proposed vision and Action Plan are consistent with the NZ Disability Strategy 2001, LGA 2002 and Building Act 2004, and the Council's Footpath Management Policy 2007 and Walking Policy 2008. It is aligned with work on the draft Central City Framework and the Wellington: Towards 2040 City Strategy.

Appendix one:

Draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan 2011-2014 Promoting inclusion

Introduction

Development of the draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan (draft Action Plan) has received wide support from the disability sector and older person's communities, Council officers, and also the business sectors, including retail, property, hospitality, accommodation and entertainment.

Background

Providing accessible services, communication channels, transport, buildings and public spaces can make Wellington City more inclusive for everyone. It enhances the diversity of the city and helps the city remain attractive to residents and visitors of any age and ability.

Adopting the principle of universal design allows us to consider access for everyone. This includes people with disabilities as well as parents with children in prams and older people with an age-related decrease in mobility or sensory abilities. An estimated 21,600 working-age Wellingtonians have disabilities (12 percent – Quality of Life Survey 2008) and this will increase as the population age. There are 3500 mobility card holders in Wellington City – most of whom are over 65.

We want to build on our reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible city that is accessible, safe and easy to get around. This draft Action Plan is to act as our guide and will enhance people's independence, ability to participate, to engage in and benefit from key Council services.

At the end of 2009, the Council agreed to start work on an Accessible Wellington Action Plan.

In 2010:

- the Council's Accessibility Advisory Group developed initial priority areas for action
- officers worked to identify what was working well, what could be easily improved, and what could be done in the longer term
- a wide range of agency, individual and community stakeholders shared their ideas on what the priorities should address:
 - ease and safety of travel across and around Wellington City
 - building the Council's internal capability for delivery on accessibility across all of its activities and services
 - improving access to information and increasing community participation.

Purpose

The Action Plan will enhance Wellington's reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible city and one that is accessible, safe and easily to get around.

The plan sets out specific goals, will include measurable criteria and is a starting point for both coordinating what Wellington City Council is already doing and

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recommending some key actions for the next three years. With increased awareness of accessibility along with monitoring outcomes of the Action Plan, there is an assumption that future actions will be identified. So in a sense, this is considered to be a living document.

Principles

Actions within the plan are underpinned by the commitment to ensure Wellington is an inclusive, universally accessible city where all residents and visitors can fully participate in community and civic life.

The draft Action Plan supports outcomes for places, people and partnerships in Wellington that will:

- reduce and eliminate social and physical barriers in our facilities, programmes, services and information mediums
- provide best practice examples in planning for universal access and service delivery as well as in the development and implementation of policies
- provide staff development opportunities that will assist enhancing the Council's understanding and delivery of the action plan.
- strengthen advocacy and partnerships with other tiers of government, departments and community stakeholders to address and eliminate barriers to participation
- reinforce a culture that celebrates the diversity of all people who live, work, and study or visit our city.

These outcomes are framed in six groupings

1. Social and recreation
2. Governance
3. Ease of travel across and around Wellington City
4. Cultural wellbeing
5. The built environment and open spaces
6. Economic development

How will we know Wellington is an accessible city?

The plan will be effective when the goals set out in this plan are met and people are able to carry out community and civic activities without barriers: social, physical or environmental

An Accessible Wellington will:

- feel vibrant, diverse and inclusive
- embrace the diversity of its residents and visitors
- feel safe physically and emotionally
- feel welcoming and respectful, with everyone's contributions valued.
- Residents and visitors will have:
- ready access to information on transport, Council and business services, employment, entertainment, hospitality, events, education, recreation, etc
- access to services (eg accessible public transport, public buildings, restaurants, theatres, accommodation, business providers)

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- efficient transport options (including mobility parking, public transport, active mode routes, multi node routes and clear signage and wayfinding).
- Easy access to buildings, with disability options

Links to Wellington City Council's strategic priorities

The draft Action Plan is a new initiative. The Council's approach is underpinned by its Social and Recreation Strategy, Older Persons Policy 2005, and is aligned with the Central City Framework and the Wellington Towards 2040 City Strategy.

Ten of the Council's current Long Term Plan 2009-19 Community Outcomes and all seven strategies include commitments that directly apply to accessibility. These relate to social services, city amenities, recreation, indoor and outdoor facilities and spaces, public transport, the pedestrian environment, green open spaces and the coast, communities, information and media.

The Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually through a variety of means, including the Annual Plan process, with outcomes being reported to the community as part of the annual community forum.

The plans, outcomes and actions will deliver on the six goals and are grouped in the priority areas as identified by the Accessibility Advisory Group.

Social and Recreation

Everyone should be able to participate in Wellington life as they wish and facilities, programmes and events should offer a range of options to encourage participation.

Proposed outcomes

Everyone is able to access information and resources and participate in social and recreation opportunities and Wellingtonians continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

At the moment, we:

- strive to provide information and resources to ensure accessible services including expanding the way people can access information (eg sign language, audio description, captioning)
- regularly review and improve library and recreational services to meet the needs of everyone
- engage with sector experts to inform ongoing projects
- develop partnerships that support the development of accessible programmes, arts and events
- work to improve the accessibility of Council buildings, programmes and facilities, and work with the sector to support wider accessibility
- monitor the experience of residents and visitors to understand and improve provisions for people with disabilities
- are reviewing the grants process to ensure it is responsive to and delivers on accessibility.
- Over the next three years, we will:
- review the way information and resources can be accessed and delivered

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- explore opportunities to ensure services respond to the varied and diverse needs of the community
- establish a regular accessibility audit cycle for all Council facilities, services, and recreation and community centre programmes
- review how accessibility information is promoted in publications, marketing and press releases
- strengthen partnerships to increase the provision of accessible services, providers, events and venues across the city
- ensure Council events and venues are accessible and inclusive
- investigate use of 'Companion Cards' across the city's cultural and recreational activities
- ensure emergency preparedness messaging is accessible and promoted effectively to the disability community, especially exploring the use of social media

Governance

Opportunities for civic participation for the whole community is central to an inclusive democratic city and activities such as voting, making submissions or attending meetings should not present barriers to participation.

Proposed outcomes

Wellington's diverse communities are able to participate in civic activities and decision making.

At the moment, we:

- consider all aspects of accessibility and inclusion when we develop engagement plans (e.g. voting, public meetings and consultations), as well as in our planning, reporting, and policy development
- identify specific training, skill and guidance needed for staff, such as in designing accessible meetings, documents, presentations or events
- ensure the accessibility and usability of the Council website, and our publications follow best practice
- review the accessibility and usability of the information provided in publications and promotions.

Over the next three years, we will:

- explore approaches that support new engagement options as part of the Council's democratic process
- improve promotion of accessible public meetings. This includes venues, use of sign language and aids for visually impaired.

Ease of travel across and around Wellington City

This is about being able to choose a method of transport that suits you and the journey you are making

Proposed outcomes

Public transport networks are accessible and inclusive

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At the moment, we:

- collaborate and use partnerships to assist in accessible transport options
- improve ways to use signage and way finding, and better-manage footpath clutter
- are reviewing the distribution of mobility parks in the suburbs
- are monitoring the taxis-in-bus-lanes trial and the impact of the SaferRoads speed limit programme on pedestrian safety
- engage with sector experts early when planning for major projects
- work with Greater Wellington to include accessible journeys on their journey planner website
- are improving contractors' temporary traffic and pedestrian management plan for accessibility around roadworks.

Over the next three years, we will:

- develop a bus stop design standard to improve accessibility
- work with public transport providers to:
 - align infrastructure planning
 - promote accessibility awareness and skills training, and increase the availability of accessible transport options
 - improve access to public transport information
 - improve the accessibility of fleet vehicles.
 - improve physical space in buses for easy wheel chair access
- complete planned work programmes (eg accessible parking meters and crossing signals, lighting upgrades, footpath upgrades, kerb ramps, seating) and promote creation of pedestrian shelters and covered footpath routes
- implement recommendations from the review of the impact of the SaferRoads project on pedestrian safety
- develop programmes that will create accessible pedestrian routes throughout the suburbs and consider increased number of mobility parks as well as covered footpath routes and seating.

The built environment and open spaces

Planning for and incorporating universal design and access into the city's urban form and open spaces will ensure the city is inclusive to all residents and visitors. Access to, flow through and use of public spaces, parks and gardens are important to all of us.

Proposed outcomes

To enable everyone to access, use and enjoy public spaces as well as participating in the activities of the city. All Wellingtonians can use and enjoy open spaces for a wide range of social and recreational uses.

At the moment, we:

- build accessibility considerations into plans, project briefs and consultation documents
- work with the building and local government sectors to clarify aspects of the Building Act 2004 and expectations around accessibility

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- consider all aspects of the accessible journey when planning and/or upgrading footpaths, shared spaces and all open spaces. This includes the use of appropriate signage
- plan for the need to include resting places and seating, as well as minimising steps
- complete accessibility audits of tracks, commuter routes and beaches so accessible features can be included on the Council's webmap.

Over the next three years, we will:

- improve compliance monitoring against the Building Act 2004
- help building owners to understand the benefits of universal access and exceeding the minimum accessibility requirements
- establish an accessibility audit programme for Council buildings, venues and public spaces
- develop GIS information that will map accessible routes and through the city and green spaces
- consider options that support independent participation in household waste and recycling collection
- review accessibility for children's playgrounds and explore provision for activities for families

Cultural wellbeing

Promotes and supports opportunities to participate in, contribute to and enjoy cultural events. Creating opportunities for inclusion in cultural and creative programmes and events requires accessible facilities and accessible programmes.

Proposed outcomes

Remove barriers to access so everyone can participate in the cultural life of the city.

At the moment, we:

- include accessible performance clauses for theatres and groups that provide live performances in Council-owned venues
- develop partnerships to support accessible arts and culture for the city
- work with partners to provide accessible venues, meetings and exhibition guides
- support signed and audio descriptions for live performances as well as gallery and museum tours
- include accessibility considerations in event planning

Over the next three years we will

- demonstrate a commitment always consider accessibility in venue selection, interactions and meetings for Council activities
- establish an accessibility audit cycle for venues, facilities and programmes
- review the range of delivery options available for city artworks such as , audio tours of sculptures.

Economic development

A diverse workforce will support future growth in Wellington as well as acknowledge the ageing population and change in the way we manage retirement. Wellington City Council has the potential to offer leadership as an employment champion.

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Proposed outcomes

To enable everyone to access, use and enjoy business, education, and employment opportunities offered in our city.

At the moment, we:

- ensure business changes (eg e-payments) consider accessibility
- provide accessibility information for Council-controlled organisations as well as identify access provisions in website, promotional materials and media releases
- support the Positively Wellington Tourism Wellington Visitor Strategy 2015, and encourage the philosophy 'Tourism Accessibility for all'.

Over the next three years, we will:

- work with Grow Wellington to promote an accessibility-focussed business network
- work with Positively Wellington Tourism to develop accessibility information
- encourage tourism providers to develop accessible facilities
- use audits of events and premises to enhance services.

Appendix two

Links to central government initiatives

The draft Action Plan is consistent with the:

- New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001 (NZDS)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007 (Disability Convention) – ratified in New Zealand in 2008.

These foundation documents and the draft Action Plan are based on the social model of disability and on a vision of a fully inclusive society that protects and promotes the human rights of people with disabilities. The draft Action Plan will help deliver on several NZDS objectives, particularly to:

1. encourage and educate for a non-disabling society
2. foster leadership by disabled people
3. foster an aware and responsive public service
4. support quality living in the community for disabled people
5. support lifestyle choices, recreation and culture for disabled people.

The Disability Convention principles are:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.
- Accessibility, and full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
- Non-discrimination, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.
- Equality of opportunity, and between men and women.
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

The draft Action Plan is also consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi 1840, Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006, and New Zealand Building Act 2004.

Appendix Three: Explanation of key terms

Accessibility

A general term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. In this context it refers to the removal of barriers that prevent people with impairments participating fully in community and civic life. Accessibility is a very broad term covering all aspects of participation and includes: getting around, democratic activities, technology, sources of communication and media to ensure information. Designing products and services that are accessible benefit everyone, which includes families with young children as well as people with age related impairments.

The term 'accessibility' is also used in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the term 'universal design'.

Universal design

Refers to broad-spectrum ideas meant to produce buildings, products and environments that are inherently accessible to both people with disabilities and those without.

The term 'universal design' was coined by the architect Ronald L. Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability or status in life.

Curb cuts or sidewalk ramps, essential for people in wheelchairs but also used by all, are a common example. There are also cabinets with pull-out shelves, kitchen counters at several heights to accommodate different tasks and postures, and amid many of the world's public transit systems, low-floor buses that 'kneel' (bring their front end to ground level to eliminate gap) and/or are equipped with ramps rather than on-board lifts.

Usability

Is used to describe the extent to which a product (eg device, service or environment) can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction.

Barrier free

The removal of barriers, whether physical, social or sensory, and therefore the opportunity for people with disabilities to participate (*United Nations*)

Accessible journey

Routes connecting destinations and services where approachability, accessibility and usability are enabling for people with disabilities.

Accessible tourism

Tourism and travel that is accessible to all.

Disability sector

All organisations and people whose purpose focuses on people with disabilities.

Inclusion

Enabling residents and visitors to participate in a full range of activities with as few barriers as possible.