

Accessibility Advisory Group
Annual Report
2020 - 2021

Accessibility Advisory Group

Purpose

The Purpose of the Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) is to:

- Advise Council on how to help grow a great and accessible City, where barriers to people with impairments are minimised.
- Bring lived experience and knowledge to Council around accessibility issues in the context of Council's roles and priorities.

Group Composition

AAG membership has been selected to provide a considerable range and depth of accessibility expertise. All members have lived experience of disability and a variety of access needs. We do not purport to represent any particular community or the full spectrum of accessibility perspectives, however we do have a diverse mix of gender, ethnicity, age, impairments, and accessibility experiences.

AAG Members in 2020/2021

Rachel Noble (Co-chair)
Nick Ruane (Co-chair)
Amy Evanson
Alan Royal
Stuart Mills

Tristram Ingham (Resigned)
Erikka Helliwell
Solmaz Nazari Orakani
Rosie MacLeod

Council appointed members

Councillor Rebecca Matthews
Councillor Tamatha Paul (Alternate)

Council officers

Liam Hodgetts (ELT Representative)
Hedi Mueller (AAG Secretariat)
Melissa Wells (Senior Accessibility Advisor)

Acknowledgements

AAG would like to thank the council officers who have taken their time to engage with AAG or consult on work programmes.

In particular AAG would like to thank our ELT representative Moana Mackey for her commitment to attending our meetings and for championing accessibility within the Executive. Hedi Mueller has been amazing support to our members and provided very efficient and effective secretariat services.

AAG would also especially like to thank Councillor Rebecca Matthews for her passion and effective advocacy at the council table as our Council representative. We are sure that commitment is shared by all councillors and we look forward to working together to shift the dial for accessibility in the year ahead.

Reporting Structure

The Accessibility Advisory Group reports as a single body.

Membership and Meetings

AAG does not have any current internal or external memoranda of understanding or formal relationships.

Member attendance has been extremely high, despite several members suffering inter-current illnesses. Overall engagement from members, including engagement between meetings and involvement in other fora, has been excellent.

Attendance at AAG meetings over the extended January 2020 – June 2021 year (15 meetings) has been as follows:

Name	Number attended	Percentage
Amy Evanson	10	75%
Erikka Helliwell	10	75%
Tristram Ingham	3 of 6	50%
Rachel Noble	15	100%
Rosie Macleod	8	53%
Stuart Mills	10	75%
Solmaz Nazari Orakani	10	75%
Alan Royal	15	100%
Nick Ruane	12	80%

Annual Work Programme

As reported in last year's report, AAG proposed a bold forward work programme for the present year that, with appropriate support and buy-in from WCC, may have seen a greater level of engagement and progress on accessibility issues in partnership with WCC. The work programme was drafted and submitted by AAG but not formally agreed or adopted by WCC.

Some uncertainty has certainly been felt as we eagerly await the result of the review of the advisory groups to enhance WCCs efficient and effective use of these important groups.

Activity

This reporting period has seen AAG engage with a wide range of council officers, projects and initiatives.

We were encouraged by early and positive engagements around the 'Lets Get Welly Moving' programme which AAG see as a critical work programme that will have far reaching consequences for accessibility over the coming decades. We remain committed to ensuring that accessible design and modelling is integrally woven into all aspects of that programme as it moves into detailed design and delivery.

We were involved in the assessment of applications for the Accessibility Awards and were gratified to see some businesses really embracing the opportunity to showcase inclusive initiatives – a real highlight for AAG was the Royal New Zealand Ballet award. The fact that there were limited applications and one category that could not be awarded indicates the need to publicise the opportunities and engage with the business community throughout the year to encourage more initiatives that can be celebrated in this way.

Provision of Advice

AAG was able to provide advice to the following projects during this report period:

Feb 2020	Wellington Design Manual and Accessible Wellington Action Plan Engagement
Mar 2020	Emergency Management
May 2020	Suburban Pedestrian Ramp Audit and Annual Plan
June 2020	Footpath Management Policy and Trading in Public Places Policy
July 2020	Cemeteries Management Plan Review and Long-Term Plan
Aug 2020	WCC Website Re-design
Sept 2020	New Map for Wellington Botanic Gardens and LGWM
Oct 2020	Advisory Groups Review
Nov 2020	Priority Strategies
Jan 2021	Emergency Welfare Messaging for Priority Communities and Wellington at Night Action Plan
Feb 2021	Digital Communication Discussion Forum and Emergency and Evacuation Plan
Mar 2021	City Housing and Priority Strategies
April 2021	City Events and Wellington Region Emergency Management Office
May 2021	Draft of Trading and Events in Public Places and Draft Letter to Mayoral Forum
June 20201	City Events and AAG Strategy

Aspirations and challenges for the year ahead

Call on Council to get the Accessibility Charter signed and having AAG having a governance role around the Charter along with a Council Accessibility Governance Board, using the Charter as a tool and mechanism to govern.

Use AAG as a way to acknowledge that Council is placing disabled people in positions of leadership is a way to demonstrate that Council is taking disabled peoples' leadership seriously.

As we indicated last year, there are a number of initiatives at international, national and local levels that provide exciting opportunities for us to collectively provide more strategic influence in the next twelve months to leverage accessibility improvements for our population, including:

- Disability Ministry (focal point of disability leadership) and Accessibility Legislation Bill
- WCC is further ahead than other councils, we're doing ok relative to other councils, particularly around providing pathways for disabled people into leadership, and having Accessibility Advisory Groups
- National and Regional COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery programmes – including inclusive employment opportunities, and community resilience initiatives
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COVID-19 has certainly left its mark on the functioning and psyche, not only of WCC but the region and nation as a whole. In many cases, the pandemic response has highlighted a number of things we do well, but also a number where we have room for improvement, and created opportunities for us to learn from this emergency to strengthen our communities, ensure our services are accessible by all, and even change our fundamental ways of working. The AAG is committed to supporting the Council to be a national leader in accessibility and striving to achieve a fully inclusive society. We remain committed to being of service to officers and individual business units who need our input to their various projects and initiatives.

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- National and Regional COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Recovery programmes – including 'shovel ready projects', inclusive employment opportunities, and community resilience initiatives;
- The Second Examination of New Zealand under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD) – including addressing issues raised in the 'Making Disability Rights Real' Report of the NZ Independent Monitoring Mechanism to the UNCRPD;
- The commitment by government to explore national accessibility legislation, and the implications of this for WCC as local government;
- The newly revised Disability Action Plan 2019-2023 (by Office for Disability Issues);
- The opportunity for WCC to sign the Accessibility Charter (led by the Ministry of Social Development - currently signed by all central Government Departments);

- Modernisation of local election processes (removing barriers to equity in voter participation, particularly for people with accessibility needs);
- The Reform of the Local Government Regulatory Systems Amendment Bill (will provide an opportunity to ensure council documents are accessible by requiring accessible formats through rules created by the Secretary of Local Government);
- The WCC 'Planning for Growth' Programme (to accommodate up to 30,000 new residents over the next 30 years);
- The WCC Earthquake strengthening projects of the Michael Fowler Centre, Town Hall, City Council Offices and Central Library.

As always, AAG stands ready to provide strategic leadership on these and other accessibility matters and willingness to partner with all of WCC to co-design a more accessible, inclusive environment for the population of Wellington.

Rachel Noble and Nick Ruane
Co-Chairs, On behalf of AAG