

## DISABILITY REFERENCE GROUP

### MINUTES

5.30 P.M. – Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2009  
Committee Room 2

#### Members Present

Sara Pivac Alexander (Co-Chair)  
Rosie Macleod (Co-Chair)  
Jules Taniwha  
Thomas Bryan  
James Tait  
Sandie Waddell  
Lisette Wesseling  
Alan Royal  
Philippa McDonald

#### Also Present

Marie Retimanu-Pule (WCC)  
Sinead Roe (WCC)  
Councillor Iona Pannett

#### **1. Welcome**

The chair welcomed the group and thanked everyone for attending.

#### **2. Apologies**

All members were present for this meeting.

#### **3. Gerald Blunt – Lower Cuba Street**

Gerald Blunt (WCC, Chief Urban Designer) presented to the group about the proposed lower Cuba Street/Manners Mall development. The proposal is to make Manners Mall open to buses and redevelop lower Cuba Street making this a shared space. Urban Design will be working closely with the DRG on development proposals for this area. Gerald Blunt then went through the consultation process explaining the reasoning behind the opening of Manners Mall and the design concepts for the area.

#### **Questions & Comments:**

What direction will busses be going through Manners Street? *Busses will go in a two way direction between Taranaki Street and Willis Street.*

Manners Mall is family orientated, are places going to have to change because of traffic? *Yes there will be changes and one of these will include wide footpaths. The conditions in this area will not be that different and will be like other parts of the city that have adapted and changed. Lower Cuba Street will change as well for the better.*

It was noted that it is important that this area is made inclusive.

We are aware of overseas research regarding the concept behind shared spaces but eye contact between drivers and pedestrians is important and this is not the case for blind people. Why can't we keep the kerb and footpath as they are so that blind people know where they are? *The desire is to have a shared surface but Council are not committed to this and will have to look at all the issues. The idea for a flush surface is for events and Council are very aware of the issues and will work through these in the design process.*

What about lighting as this is not shown in the design? *Council will be looking at this but it is proposed to have similar lighting like that in Courtenay Place. A good standard of lighting will be provided.*

#### **4. Nick Jones & Michael Gould – Karori Wildlife Sanctuary Visitor Centre**

Michael Gould (architect for the project) gave a presentation on the building progress for the new centre. He went through the plans for the building showing gradients, exit, entry and layout for the building and explained how the building has been designed to fit within the constraints and contours of the site.

#### **Questions & Comments:**

The building design looks fabulous and it is impressive that access issues have been looked into. With regard to the 1:20 gradient walkway it is noted that there are no handrails in the design so we have to assume that this will be the same as walking on a flat area. *Technically this walkway is a ramp but we want to think of it as a footpath. The walkway will be a 2.4 metre wide timber boardwalk.*

There are only two accessible car parks shown in the design. This is two out of how many? *There are three different tiers of parking providing possibly 60 parks. Is there room to add more accessible parks? Parking is an issue for the site and is very tight.*

It needs to be remembered that mobility is not just about people with physical disabilities. There will be a significant amount of older people visiting the Sanctuary and parks will be at maximum use. Providing two parks will be too light. *We will look at this but we are very limited to where we can put parking.*

It will be useful to look at the demographics of the people who are already visiting the Sanctuary to judge the amount of accessible parking that should be provided.

Some places operate a booking system for accessible parks and maybe this would be a good idea for the Sanctuary.

With regard to the handrail for the boardwalk, would it be possible to provide a handrail on one side only? *The emphasis for the entry is on a garden area as this is what the Sanctuary is about but we are not against providing a*

*handrail. The entry is not seen as any different to a footpath and in the design process a handrail was not seen as being necessary. A handrail does provide stability for some people. We did look at providing a handrail originally but it was decided against because only an intermittent handrail would be able to be provided. We will look at this issue again. Maybe a handrail could be provided in some sections rather than a continuous handrail as this would give people something to hold on to and would provide stability particularly for the elderly.*

What sort of fire emergency equipment will be installed in the building?  
*There will be an audible fire alarm and flashing red strobes will be installed.*

## **5. Confirmation of Minutes**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record by Sandie Waddell, seconded by Lisette Wesseling and then by the whole group.

## **6. Report from the Chairs**

**Changes to DRG** – it was agreed to continue having Co-chairs as this system is working well. Members who are eligible encouraged to consider whether they are interested in being co-chair. A new Co-chair will be selected by the group in October. It was noted that James Tait is to be supported in his work (as a mental health representative) on the Housing subgroup and a candidate for this support role has been approached and interviewed by the Co-Chairs and James.

**LTCCP** – a response has been received to the submission made by the DRG. Sinead is in the process of getting a text version for distribution. Discussions will be held off until the next meeting when everyone has received a copy of the response. Some points may need to be followed up by subgroups. The Chairs were disappointed to note no response to the DRG's submission about adopting a disability strategy.

**Accessibility Advisor** – a farewell for Sinead will be held on 18 August. Sara and Council Officers to action this.

## **7. Council Officer's Report**

Sinead's last day at Council will be 28 August and Jula Goebel will be taking over this position on a short term three month contract while an external recruitment process is carried out.

**Comments** - It was noted that DRG members would like to see more than one DRG member on the interviewing panel for this position and for these members to be involved in the shortlisting process as well. *Council will be more than happy to consider having two DRG members on the interview panel. The panel members will be involved in the shortlisting process.*

**Text Messaging** – Council’s Knowledge Solutions Unit are proposing a pilot project exploring how we can use text messaging to get in contact with people. Council need DRG feedback on how useful this would be and what kind of information people would want to receive. This may be useful for the Deaf community. The system could be used to keep people up to date on what is happening at Council similar to web alerts.

**Comments** – User cost from following weblinks in text messages should be considered.

Information shared via text messages should be available in a variety of means to allow people to have access in a way they choose.

Council needs to be careful information is managed so text messages are not duplicated.

*It’s envisaged information would only be regarding more general Council-wide issues.*

More information was sought regarding the cost of such a service to users.

**Action:** Sinead to forward the comments onto Knowledge Solutions and keep everyone up to date on this project.

**GWRC Walking and Cycling Planner website** – This website will allow planning of walking and cycling journeys in the Wellington region. Different information layers may be used to allow planning of accessible routes including locations of features such as pedestrian crossings, public seating, accessible toilets etc.

GWRC to attend the September DRG meeting to demonstrate the website.

**Suggestions of questions to ask:** having safety guidelines included on the website; the location of public phone boxes;

**Disability Action Plan** – Represents an operational Council commitment to projects and activities to help make the city more accessible and will be in line with the work plan of the Accessibility Advisor. DRG members were asked what they would like to see included in the Action Plan. This goes over a three year period – where would members like to concentrate their efforts - where is the greatest need with regard to accessibility issues?

**Ideas Noted:** Action areas could be divided according to current DRG subgroups. Environment subgroup for footpath management. Access to documentation – use of website and accessible documents.

A concern of the DRG is that they have been wanting to get the NZ Disability Strategy adopted by Council. DRG have to go ahead with a disability action plan as they have identified important issues in the draft plan but would still like to see the disability strategy adopted.

**Action:** DRG members to read through the draft Action Plan and give feedback as soon as possible.

## 8. Subgroup Reports

**Disability Policy Subgroup** – will report at the next meeting.

**Housing Subgroup** – the Accessible Wellington Design Competition has been judged. There are still some concerns with the winning designs, ie, where to park mobility scooters when it rains as access is only via the back of the building. Judges were impressed with the open approach to rooms and open areas of the winning design but there are still some things to be worked on.

The ICT and Arts Subgroups will report back at the next meeting.

## 9. Other Business

Members were disappointed with the presentations and presenters at this meeting. Information was given too quickly and presentations were not accessible to blind DRG members. Guidelines for presenters have been developed by the DRG and these should be followed. The Disability Action Plan should include education within Council for staff when presenting to the DRG and what is required.

A question was raised with regard to a proposal to decentralise documents with each Council unit preparing their own documents. This should be more about creating accessible documents and not about decentralising.  
*Clarification: This is a proposal to provide training in creating accessible and flexible documents for Business Units within Council. It forms part of a larger proposal around providing training for Council staff in key areas to improve awareness and responsiveness around accessibility.* DRG requested to see the proposal, noting many people have limited understanding of these issues.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm  
Next meeting is scheduled for: Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 5:30 pm.