
REPORT 2
(1215/52/IM)

ACCESSIBLE WELLINGTON ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

This report outlines feedback on the draft Accessible Wellington Action Plan and presents the final Plan for adoption.

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 was released for public comment on 5 December 2011 at the Accessible Wellington Forum.

The Council received 27 submissions on the draft Action Plan and comprehensive feedback at the Accessible Wellington Forum and a follow-up workshop in February. There was a high level of support for the draft Plan and several submissions congratulated the Council for the content of the draft Plan and its collaborative approach with the Accessibility Advisory Group. Many submissions commented a multiple aspects, suggesting that those that took the time to submit were truly engaged.

This report seeks agreement to adopt an amended Plan after considering feedback as the final Accessible Wellington Action Plan.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Note the feedback from the consultation process outlined in Section 5.1.*
- 3. Agree to adopt the Accessible Wellington Action Plan (see Appendix 1).*

4. Background

The draft Action Plan was prepared after an extensive 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). The Strategy and Policy Committee agreed for the draft Action Plan to be released for public comment

in November 2011 and the consultation process was launched at the Accessible Wellington Forum (5 December 2011). The consultation process was supported by promotion through articles on the Our Wellington page and the Wellingtonian and an online banner on dompost.co.nz that took people to the consultation page on the Council's website.

A key feature of this consultation programme was a suite of initiatives intended to make the process as accessible as possible. These included:

- The draft plan being available in a variety of formats both online and in print as well as through the Royal Foundation for the Blind messaging service.
- Opportunities for in person feedback on libraries and at the Accessible Wellington Forum and follow-up workshop in February.
- The ability to leave feedback by leaving messages by phone.

5. Discussion

5.1 Feedback on the draft Action Plan

The Council received 27 submissions on the draft Action Plan along with comprehensive feedback at the Accessible Wellington Forum and a follow-up workshop in February. 12 submissions used the online form, 6 emailed directly, 5 sent letters, 2 used the form in the document, and 2 people left feedback on the phone messaging service.

There was a high level of support for the draft Plan and several submissions congratulated the Council for the content of the draft Plan and its collaborative approach with the Accessibility Advisory Group. Many submissions commented a multiple aspects, suggesting that those that took the time to submit were truly engaged.

Much of the feedback provided detailed comments on initiatives in the draft Action Plan. This feedback will be invaluable as actions are implemented. These are a key themes emerging from the feedback:

Overall approach:

Some submitters would like to see specific timeframes and deliverables for the actions in the draft plan. We also received some feedback that the Council should take a more regional approach.

Social and Recreation:

A number of submissions identified the importance of physically accessible buildings as a key consideration for the draft Plan. This included considering incorporating a Barrier Free access audit for all Council projects and monitoring the cycle of audit reports at regular intervals. Other suggestions included providing financial support and ease of access to those who support people with disabilities, encouraging more community gardens as excellent psycho-social settings for people with chronic conditions, and doing more to support people with disabilities in an emergency.

Governance:

The focus of submissions in the Governance area was on improving how information was shared and ensuring that the Council's customer services are attentive to the needs of people with disabilities. There were several suggestions around harnessing the power of the internet to improve access to information through quality website design and use of mobile apps.

Ease of travel across and around Wellington City:

We received the most amount of feedback on this section of the draft Plan. There was a significant amount of comment on the public transport system and its operation which will be forwarded to Greater Wellington. The supply and enforcement of mobility parking was a key issue for many submitters with a number of suggestions for more supportive enforcement practices.

The Built Environment and Open Spaces:

This was another area where we received a significant amount of comment, particularly in relation to the design public toilets. Submissions also expressed a desire for developers to move from a compliance viewpoint to seeing accessibility as good business. We also received a number of submissions on the design and accessibility of public open spaces.

Arts and Culture:

Similar to the Social and Recreation area, a number of submissions identified the importance of physically accessible buildings. Several submissions also commented that this area was too heavily focused on audiences rather than performers and participants. Quality information about accessible programmes and facilities was identified as being pivotal to fully enjoying the arts and culture offerings in Wellington.

Economic Development

Economic Development was the area to receive the least amount of comment. The comments we did receive largely mirrored feedback in the Built Environment area where the Council was encouraged to promote accessibility as good business

5.2 Amended Accessible Wellington Action Plan

Appendix A outlines proposed amendments to the draft Action Plan after considering feedback from the consultation process. The content and analysis of submissions along with the proposed amendments has been discussed with the Accessibility Advisory Group. Much of the feedback provided detailed comments on initiatives in the draft Action Plan which will be invaluable as actions are implemented. There are however a number of proposed amendments to actions in the draft Action Plan and four new actions in response to matters raised through the consultation process.

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 Action Plan 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 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.

The Action Plan includes establishing a regular cycle of accessibility audits for community, recreation, and cultural facilities. Undertaking these audits fits neatly with the overriding principle in the Action Plan that building accessibility considerations into our business as usual improves the quality of experience for the whole community. These accessibility audits will be used to identify priorities in the capital renewals programme and as such, it should be noted that the speed in which recommendations from the audits are implemented will be influenced by the proposal to reduce the capital renewals budget in the draft Long Term Plan.

6. Conclusion

Following significant early engagement and a comprehensive formal consultation process, the final Accessible Wellington Action Plan is presented for adoption.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit/Strategic Outcome

The Council's approach to accessibility is a key consideration in promoting the people-centred city goal of the *Toward Wellington 2040: Smart Capital* strategy.

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

The proposed changes will not lead to any increase in capital or operational expenditure in the Long Term Plan.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

The proposals have no implications for the Treaty.

4) Decision-Making

The Council is being asked to agree to adopt the 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 and broader public consultation has taken place.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

AAG members, Council managers and targeted stakeholders have contributed to the development of the draft Action Plan. The consultation process on draft Action Plan that included several initiatives designed to make the process as accessible as possible.

b) Consultation with Maori

Mana Whenua were included in the pre-engagement workshops on the draft Action Plan. There was no specific initiative targeting Māori in the consultation programme on the draft Plan.

6) Legal Implications

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

7) Consistency with existing policy

The Action Plan is 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.

Accessible Wellington Action Plan 2011-2014: Promoting inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Development of the Accessible Wellington Action Plan (Action Plan) has received wide support from the disability sector and older person's communities, Council staff, 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 ages. 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 Action Plan is to act as our guide and will enhance people's independence, and ability to participate, 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
- staff 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

APPENDIX 1

- 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 easy 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 recommending some key actions for the next three years. As time goes by, we may come across actions that need to be included. 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 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 help enhance 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

APPENDIX 1

4. Arts and culture
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)
 - 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.

We will compile an annual report tracking progress on the initiatives in the Action Plan. It will outline initiatives that have been completed and progress on initiatives that are ongoing over the last year. We will also measure in our annual Resident Satisfaction Survey about people's perception about ease of access in Wellington.

LINKS TO WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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

APPENDIX 1

Ten of the Council's 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, **community**, and recreational services to meet everyone's needs
- work with sector experts on ongoing projects
- develop **local and regional** partnerships that support the development of accessible programmes and events
- work to improve the accessibility of Council buildings **and housing stock**, 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.

APPENDIX 1

Over the next three years, we will:

- review the way information and resources can be accessed and delivered
- 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 **local and regional** partnerships to increase the provision of accessible services, providers, events and venues across the city
- investigate use of 'Companion Cards' (free passes for helpers) across the city's 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 (eg voting, public meetings and consultations), as well as in our planning, reporting, and policy development
- identify specific training, skills 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.

APPENDIX 1

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.
- **provide more information on accessible services and facilities.**
- **explore ways to increase the capability of organisations to participate in democratic processes.**

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.

At the moment, we:

1. collaborate and use **local and regional** partnerships to assist in accessible transport options
2. improve ways to use signs and wayfinding, and better manage footpath clutter
3. are reviewing the distribution of mobility parks in the suburbs
4. are monitoring the taxis-in-bus-lanes trial and the impact of the SaferRoads speed limit programme on pedestrian safety
5. engage with sector experts early when planning for major projects
6. work with Greater Wellington to include accessible journeys on their journey planner website
7. 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 **Greater Wellington and** public transport providers to:

APPENDIX 1

- 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 wheelchair 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 the central city** well as covered footpath routes and seating.
- **actively review the number and improving compliance of mobility parks, and investigate using loading zones and taxi zones as drop-off points for mobility card users.**

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 participate 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:

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

APPENDIX 1

3. 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 signs
4. plan for the need to include resting places and seating, as well as minimising steps
5. 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:

1. improve compliance monitoring with the Building Act 2004
2. help building owners to understand the benefits of universal access and exceeding the minimum accessibility requirements
3. establish an accessibility audit programme for Council buildings, venues and public spaces
4. develop GIS information that will map accessible routes through the city and green spaces **and accessible buildings**.
5. consider flexible options for household waste and recycling collection
6. review **the provision and design of open spaces and** accessibility for children's playgrounds and explore provision for activities for families.
7. **review the provision and design of public toilets.**

ARTS AND CULTURE

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 **local and regional** partnerships to support accessible arts and culture for the city

APPENDIX 1

- work with partners to provide accessible venues, **programmes**, 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 **for performers and audiences**.

Over the next three years, we will:

- demonstrate a commitment to always consider accessibility in venue selection, interactions and meetings for Council activities
- establish an accessibility audit cycle for venues, facilities and programmes
- review different ways to access city artworks, such as audio tours of sculptures.
- **investigate use of 'Companion Cards' (free passes for helpers) across the city's cultural activities**

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.

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'.

APPENDIX 1

Over the next three years, we will:

- work with Grow Wellington to promote an accessibility-focused business network **and provide information on accessibility for business start-ups**
- 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 ONE

Links to central government initiatives

The 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 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 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.

APPENDIX 1

- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

The 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 TWO: 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 and 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'.

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.

Barrier-free

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

APPENDIX 1

Disability

A process that occurs when 'one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have'.

'Impairments' include physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual and any other impairment and encompass people with permanent, intermittent, temporary and perceived impairments.

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.

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

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