



Report of Focus Group Proceedings:

Governance and Management of Zealandia, Otari –Wilton's Bush,
Wellington Zoo and the Botanical Garden

Wellington City Council

30 May 2012

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the focus group hosted by the Wellington City Council. The objective of the focus group was to help the Council make decisions about the governance and management of Zealandia and the city's other natural attractions – Wellington Zoo, Otari – Wilton's Bush, Wellington Zoo and the Botanical Garden.

The process supporting the focus group deliberations is included in this report along with the results of the deliberations. An appendix of the unedited notes of the focus group is also included.

Executive Summary

Twenty members of the public attended a focus group on Wednesday 30 May 2012 to seek their views on the governance and management of Wellington's natural attractions, including Zealandia, Otari-Wilton's Bush, the Zoo, and the Botanical Garden. A market research company ensured that the participants had no vested interest in any of the natural attractions, and independent facilitators from *pattillo* were engaged to ensure an objective process. The focus group examined each of the four options proposed by the working party, and also examined the status quo arrangements along with the opportunity to develop new strategies for the governance and management of Wellington's natural attractions. The participants examined each option by taking three different approaches identified from the written submissions – one supporting the status quo, the second approach proposing a business model, and the third bringing Zealandia into the Council within the Parks and Gardens Business Unit.

The focus group came to a shared conclusion that the original vision for Zealandia was to be treasured and carried forward into the future, but how it was managed needed to change in order to survive. The group also stated that Zealandia was more than a Wellington asset - that it was a national asset, due to its unique nature, and that the group's decision needed to take that view.

The results of the focus group showed that three quarters of the participants preferred Option Four – Eco City model. The strongest reasons given for this preference were economies of scale; financial security and accountability; and retaining the identity of Zealandia. Participants also made recommendations about what the Council should do, which included keeping the vision and identity of Zealandia and preserve its volunteering effort. They also recommended that the Council should not, regardless of any option chosen, introduce a charge for Otari-Wilton's Bush or the Botanical Garden.

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Process

- **Deliberative Method**

The process used for this engagement activity was based on Deliberative Process. This process asks 'reasonable people' to consider an issue of importance from a prescribed set of divergent approaches.

- **Selection of Focus Group Participants**

Twenty participants were selected randomly via a market research company who ensured a cross section of members from diverse backgrounds, ages, ethnic groups, and locations in Wellington, and checked that they have no vested interest in the subject matter of the focus group.

- **Objective of The Focus Group**

The objective of the focus group was to explore the governance and management of Zealandia and the city's other natural attraction – Wellington Zoo, Otari-Wilton's Bush, Wellington Zoo and the Botanic Garden.

- **Preparatory Material For Participants**

Three divergent approaches on this issue were presented and distributed to participants in the days leading up to the workshop. The Wellington City Council developed the approaches, based on the 1700 written public submissions received on the four proposed options developed by the working party. The three approaches were:

1. Building on Success – status quo option for Zealandia
2. Efficiency and Effectiveness – establish a new Eco-City Council Control Organisation
3. Council Management and Expertise – Zealandia brought into the Council within the Parks and Gardens Business Unit.

These approaches, along with background material, provided information to assist the participants to explore each of the four options to determine, if possible, a shared preferred option. The exploration of the three approaches by participants is attached in an unedited form as Tables 1-3 in the Appendix to this report.

The four options as identified by the working party were:

- Option 1; Stand alone Council Controlled Organisation

- Option 2: Wellington Environmental Visitor Attraction Model
- Option 3: Parks and Gardens model
- Option 4: Eco City Model.

Packs for participants also contained other relevant publicly available background information to assist deliberations on the issues associated with the governance and management of the natural attractions. This information was:

- Eco-City: Statement of proposal', April 2012, which contained the four options as identified by the working party
- Section 5.1 Financial considerations' from the report of the Zealandia Working group
- Map 2 – biodiversity in open Space
- Profile of Wellington's natural assets and nature based attractions/ Summary of four entities

- **Focus Group Process**

At the focus group, participants were invited to work through the pros and cons of each of the three approaches to get an understanding of some of the different perspectives in the community about Zealandia and the other natural attractions. The design of approaches and the process is not to lead participants to one of the four options, but as objective resource material to promote understanding of what is at stake, and generate conversations around a possible preferred position on one of the four options as proposed by the working party. Participants were informed that the focus group was one part of a wider process of consultation on this issue.

- **Independent facilitators were engaged**

The focus group were facilitated by Brenda Ratcliff and Maree Maddock, two independent facilitators from *pattillo*, to ensure that the focus group was run objectively and to elicit views of the group.

- **Role of Council Staff in the Focus Group**

Council staff attended as observers and as experts to answer questions on matters of fact only. This was to ensure an objective process to allow participants to make up their own minds on the options before them.

- **Commentary on results and process**

It was noted by the facilitators that all participants arrived on time for the focus group, and appeared knowledgeable and conversant with all the information which had been sent to them. This led to lively and engaging conversations. It appeared that the written material was relevant, easy to understand and just the right amount to stimulate conversation and assist decision making.

Participants were also asked to evaluate their experience of the focus group in terms of learning, enjoyment, and feeling listened to. These dimensions were chosen to complement the evaluation requested by the Council to ensure a fair and objective process. Participants were asked to place a red dot on a bull's eye as close or as far away from the centre as they felt the focus group met its target for each of the three dimensions. Participants were also asked to talk with the independent facilitators after the workshop if they had any needs that had not been met by the focus group experience. A photograph of the bull's eye is included in the Appendix. After the workshop, participants told facilitators that they were:

- Grateful they had the chance to participate
- Appreciated the offer to hear back from the Council on the final decision
- That they arrived with one view and left with a different and more informed view.

Results

Governance and management of Wellington's natural attractions


The results from the focus group show a clear preferred option for the governance and management of Wellington's natural attractions.

Fifteen out of the twenty participants preferred Option Four - Eco-City Model. The table on the next page shows each option from most preferred to least preferred, and reasons why analysed by theme. Individuals' reasons for their choice of option were similar and could be grouped into six themes, shown below in order of most preferred theme - economies of scale, to 'sustainability':

- Economies of scale
- Financial security and accountability
- Retaining the identity of Zealandia
- Broad vision for New Zealand
- Ability to market group of attractions under one brand
- Sustainability for the future

No one wanted to retain the status quo for Zealandia governance and management. In the final plenary session when the group reflected on their choice, regardless of their option preference, one participant summed up the view of the entire group with these words:

“Zealandia is a treasure, not only for Wellington but for the whole country, and possibly the whole world, especially if we think about the original five hundred years vision. When that time comes, people will be glad we made the right decision. Let’s honour the original vision of the founders of Zealandia, and recognise that how it is managed needs to change in order to preserve it.”

Agreement	Option	Reasons Why	Percentage of respondents with this preference
Most agreement 	Option 4: Eco-City model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economies of scale • Financial security and accountability • Retaining the identity of Zealandia • Broad vision for New Zealand • Ability to market group of attractions under one brand • Sustainability for the future 	75%
	Option 2: WEVA model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining the identity of Zealandia ▪ Financial security and accountability 	10%
	Option 3: Parks and Gardens model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economies of scale • Financial security and accountability 	5%
	Option 1: Stand alone Council Controlled Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial security and accountability 	5%
	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining the identity of Zealandia • Broad vision for New Zealand 	5%
Least agreement	Status Quo		0%

Individual reasons for why options were chosen are listed in Table Four in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Recommendations

1. Seventy-five percent of the focus group has recommended Option Four – Eco-City model, as the main option.
2. They also made clear recommendations about what the Council *should* do with respect to implementing Option Four.

The Council should:

- a. Keep the original vision and identity of Zealandia
 - b. Preserve the volunteering effort
 - c. Assist with appropriate governance options to ensure the city of Wellington retains both the asset of Zealandia and resources to make it sustainable
3. They also made a clear recommendation about what the Council should **not** do regardless of any option chosen:
 - a. The Council *should not* introduce a charge for Otari-Wilton's Bush or the Botanical Garden

Note: A summary of actions the Council should and should take across all options is included in the Appendix under Table Five.

Appendices

- Approaches
- Options
- Bull's eye evaluation

Approaches

Table 1: Report back from each table of five participants about what a supporter of each approach might say.

	Approach 1 – Building on Success	Approach 2 – Efficiency & Effectiveness	Approach 3 - Council Management and expertise
Q1 What would a supporter of this approach say was valuable about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness • Freedom to work • Original vision maintained • Would probably tend to say leave it as it is maybe with aviation of ways to improve all areas of Zealandia • Zealandia will become more commercial • Enables Zealandia to continue to be run by current Organisation how they want • Personal relationships committed to aims of Zealandia • Like the lean and volunteer model • Holds the original vision • Stay with Trust focusing of interest • Own governance • Continue to be non profit • Maintaining vision and focus • Maintaining volunteer role • Green • Keep own vision • 20 yrs experience • Maintaining existing plan special • It's knowledge • Keeps original vision • Faster development • green • Keep their own vision or ideas • Have 20 yrs experience should know what they at e doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost saving and increasing revenue • Skills sharing • Good to be efficient of economic decline Coordination and efficiency increases • Skills sharing • Resource efficiency more sustainable Skilled workers, skilled sharing • Valuable for making Zealandia accessible to more of the general public because you can promote Zealandia with package deals and reduced costs for entry as a result of this (hopefully) • Outside expertise • Utilising existing team , finance ,IT etc Increased stakeholder support(financial) Increased accountability • Secure ongoing governance • Half way between 3 approaches • Reduced costs • Package deals • No strong leadership i.e. not Council or Zealandia • Emphasis on differing ideas and values • Finance focused • 500 year plan more secure • Business enterprise • More efficient management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates saving • Economies of scale • Tax savings for ratepayers • Economies of scale • Debt write off • Rates saving bigger • Say in what is spent on what • Tighter control • Lower fixed costs • Economies of scale • Skills sharing • Debt write off • Sustainable • Rates saving • Accessible funding • Retain the status quo means money problems secure -future Loan written off Ratepayers citizen accountability Potentially better funding and maintenance • Accountability of ratepayers \$\$\$ Restructure the whole management team Council becomes responsible for finances of Zealandia • Transparency Keep costs down • Parks and gardens expertise exists • Debt reduction assistance(loan and interest) best for the Eco -city vision • Existing knowledge expertise • Debt reconciliation • Decrease of costs

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Approach 1 – Building on Success	Approach 2 – Efficiency & Effectiveness	Approach 3 - Council Management and expertise
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced costs to (CCO) • Will, trim management costs • Marketing will make it more attractive Reduced fixed costs • Retain the good aspects of Zealandia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of wealth • Ongoing security. • Knowledge • Public support of management • Owned by the people

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Table 2: Report back from each table of five participants about the consequences of implementing each approach

	Approach 1	Approach 2	Approach 3
Q2 What would be the consequences of implementing this approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploding costs • Lack of business expertise • Cost to WCC and ratepayers • Chance of Zealandia becoming a lesser attraction if funding and support isn't maintained @ current levels • Still require Council funding concerned about large Council funding of Zealandia • Sustainable funding must be maintained • No change to cost structure • May remain expensive to rate payers • Vision may change current trust members • Security none - financial Stakeholder has little control • Prices stay same • Continue to have support of volunteers • Too insular • closed to new ideas • Lack of funding from WCC and if status quo lack of funding • No skilled workers -Stagnating? • Experience but lack of funding • Too insular • Lose Council funding • High fixed costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zealandia will be a financial burden to the others, • Positive consequences would be Wellington benefits by preserving and promoting these ecological environments as a part of tourism • Costs to public if they rise, visitor levels could plummet • Volunteers phased out over time ?? • Tolls for use of Wilton's Bush and Botanical Gardens • Less specialized management • Costs of admission goes up • Save money even if some aims are deleted • Loss of supporters and their money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alienate rate payers (division re spending) Sponsorship harder to secure • Fair funding allocations • Council management • Potential loss of volunteers • Loss of specialization • May be promoted to locals/ ratepayers as resource./interest • Council manages • Potentially less volunteers • Shift in focus and vision • Loss of special skills from previous trust One leader will be easier to focus on different needs • More control exercised by Council Innovation??? • Independence gone • Volunteers??? • Battle will be supporters over cut of the aims

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Table 3: Report back from each table of five participants about the tensions or conflicts would need to be worked through to make the approach work

	Approach 1	Approach 2	Approach 3
<p>Q3</p> <p>What tensions or conflicts would need to be worked through to make the approach work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient manpower to maintain facility • Operating costs Profit focused? • Annual interest costs of 1 million dollars wee loan • Conflicts need to be worked through getting people in , with same price or more expensive • Volunteer levels funding keeping them enthusiastic etc • Have agreed targets • Increased costs without accountability versus perceived need for NZ to continue to run as it is • Council to priorities its Eco tourism attractions • Feel Council control will reduce costs in the long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses x3 • Control issues x3 • Possible loss of volunteers if not happy with new structure • Workability- Job losses versus job opportunities for skilled people managers May be resource struggles where needed for similar projects in different locations Potential amalgamation • Out working of vision • Guarantee preservation of Zealandia and jobs and volunteer space • Funding allocations • Trustees appointments • Long term vision maintained • Privatization • Rising costs • Structural changes • Volunteer levels • Commitment • More costs of all areas versus better management and profile for Eco city • Need a common vision • Council control versus management team Council make the hard decisions • Supporters leave it to the Council • Zealandia loses its identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Council red tape to overcome • Belief Council could do the job more effectively(business expertise) new initiatives to raise funding • Workability • Skills availability and resource distribution Implementation of ideas and innovations Loss of specialist skills • Lack of innovation • Concerns versus innovation • Lack of realistic business models • Lack of experience • Some loss of focus loss of identity in public view • Might not be realistic about new business implementation • \$10.4 million loan for Council ownership Council style of management and mentality Council control and financial stability versus loss of Zealandia identity • Better to work together than stand alone Establish a co working group • Consultation or potential lack of it with the public • Supporter will battle about effects of Councils decisions

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Options

Table 4: Individual report back from each participant of the option they chose, the reasons why, and the actions the Council should or should not take

Option	Reason why	Actions Council should and should not take
Status quo for Zealandia		
1	Council can appoint CCO	Be able to say what they want done if things are going wrong which trust have to agree if not making money
2	This has the same costs /benefits as Eco-city option and I believe this will change the governance of Zealandia and its promotion of it sufficiently without needing the eco city model and will provide operational funding	Should not make a toll entry for Otari /Botanic gardens
2	Eco –City for Wellington reduces WCC funding and combined units offer more sustainability and revenue and innovation	Be mindful of the purpose of the Eco-City Model and not focused on the financial aspect of the merger in selection of trustees/board/ management team
3	Most secure financially Long term sustainability Economies of scale Skills sharing and wider network of resources	Secure a long term vision/objective so that it is not compromised by politician’s agendas
4	Best management ,while maintaining individual identity for Zealandia	Not to charge tolls for botanical gardens or Otari- Wilton’s Bush Take ownership of Zealandia and write off loan
4	Provides greatest economies of scale due to specialization and a common board of trustees.	Appointing trustee members (need help here

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Option	Reason why	Actions Council should and should not take
	Promotion and maintenance costs for all four entities will work more effectively and efficiently as a whole	
4	Best result as a New Zealand wide facility rather than just a Wellington only asset or facility	Seek NZ wide funding from all NZ City/regional Councils If Wellington has to contribute to Auckland's motorway assets (for the benefit of the whole country) then Zealandia should be classified as a NZ asset and funding apportioned made across the whole country
4	High cost saving Four attractions under one "roof"	The Council should not take option 1
4	Like the idea of our great city being unique in having a vision for the future generation to enjoy our awesome unique wildlife and fauna	Not step away from the positive aspects of the original vision to preserve our wildlife Not to compromise what Zealandia has set out to do Use a percentage of total parking fines to fund Zealandia
4	Cost saving and retaining their original identity Combining will also produce more good outcomes	In retaining the identity they shouldn't alienate the present supporters of each group and sites
4	Shared resources , stops Zealandia from going bust and put into long term strategy	Keep the vision of Zealandia, look at the wider benefit. Zealandia is an attraction that defies wellington which has wider benefits rather than revenue directly from Zealandia
4	Room for growth Cost /burden sharing Wiping of \$10 million dollar debt	Stress that things won't change too much Retain volunteers/expertise

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Option	Reason why	Actions Council should and should not take
4	Strong governance structure Saving money Funding is sustainable	Council should prioritise and support ECO Tourism
4	Strength of this option in single CCO The name Eco –City Marketing for one	Discuss review options Potential sponsors Increase in funds for Eco-city Should not increase structure of business
4	I believe allowing a trust between the Council and the entities will permit them to run more smoothly rather than be directly affected by Council issues and pressure .Aligning them with entities of similar function should allow resources to be pooled, hopefully with little conflict	I believe if Zealandia and Zoo were more closely aligned in management, promotions run in conjunction could raise the profiles of both to mutual advantage. Many people seem to know one more than the other, but perhaps could be encouraged to use both if they could afford it
4	Survival with broad vision	Keep positive and moving us forward
4	Good marketing tool Accountability Things need to change	Minimise impact of not losing volunteers Minimise user pays cost on using attractions in the future
4	Simpler management Ticks all the boxes	Should not Charge for Botanic gardens and Otari Waste money on new signage etc.

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Option	Reason why	Actions Council should and should not take
		Ignore ratepayers ideas etc.
4	History, Heritage, Inheritance	Assist with appropriate governance options to ensure the city of Wellington retains both asset and resources
Other: Should be preserved for future generations	Unique , no other like it for all NZ	

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Table 5: Summary of Actions the Council should and should take across all Options

Option	Actions Council should take	Actions Council should not take
<p>Option Four: Eco-City model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not step away from the positive aspects of the original vision to preserve our wildlife • Not to compromise what Zealandia has set out to do • Keep the vision of Zealandia, look at the wider benefit. Zealandia is an attraction that defines Wellington which has wider benefits rather than revenue directly from Zealandia • Take ownership of Zealandia and write off loan • Appointing trustee members (too general and the following for specializing in and specifically representing each individual entity to ensure each has a unique voice and that there is also present voices of objectivity to achieve greatest results over all. • Seek NZ wide funding from all NZ City/regional Councils (If Wellington has to contribute to Auckland's motorway assets (for the benefit of the whole country) then Zealandia should be classified as a NZ asset and funding apportioned made across the whole country • Assist with appropriate governance options to ensure the city of Wellington retains both asset and resources • In retaining the identity they shouldn't alienate the present supporters of each group and sites • Minimise impact of not losing volunteers • Minimise user pays cost on using attractions in the future • I believe if Zealandia and Zoo were more closely aligned in management, promotions run in conjunction could raise the profiles of both to mutual advantage. Many people seem to know one more than the other, but perhaps could be encouraged to use both if they could afford it • Stress that things won't change too much • Retain volunteers/expertise • Council should prioritise and support ECO Tourism • Discuss review options • [Find] potential sponsors • Increase funds for Eco-city • Use a percentage of total parking fines to fund Zealandia • Keep positive and moving us forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not make a toll entry for Otari /Botanic gardens • Charge for Botanic gardens and Otari • Should not increase structure of business • The Council should not take option 1 • Waste money on new signage etc. • Ignore ratepayers ideas etc.

Option	Actions Council should take	Actions Council should not take
Option 3: Parks and Gardens model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure a long term vision/objective so that it is not compromised by politician's agendas 	
Option 2: WEVA model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be mindful of the purpose of the eco-city model and not focused on the financial aspect of the merger in selection of trustees/board/ management team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not to charge tolls for Botanical Gardens or Otari-Wilton's Bush
Option 1: Stand alone Council Controlled Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to say what they want done if things are going wrong which Trust have to agree to if not making money 	

Bull's eye evaluation

